

7-1-18

PORTUGAL A BLAZE OF FREEDOM

BIG FLAME



\$1.00

GLOSSARY

AOC	Association of Workers and Agricultural Workers. A marxist-leninist organisation with a strong base in some unions. It won the leadership of the chemical workers union from the PCP, which it typifies as 'social-fascist'. This probably helped to get it banned from taking part in the election campaign.	PCP	Portuguese Communist Party, led by Alvaro Cunhal, is Moscow-orientated and is strong in the armed forces, press and tv, local administrations, Alentejo farm workers and sections of industrial workers. Adept at strike busting. Decades old.
CDS	Christian Democrats, led by do Amaral, once a deputy in the fascist parliament. Its secretary general, Adelino Amaro, was chief aid to Caetano's education minister, and another member, Valentin Pintado, was secretary of state for commerce under Caetano. It is the most ring wing party and is linked to the Conservative Party. A refuge for fascists and capitalists.	PDC	so-called Christian Democratic Party, banned from taking part in elections, attacked by left and hardly exists now except as an evil idea in the mind of some fascists.
COPCON	Continental Operations Command: set up in July 74 under the day to day command of Brigadier Otelo de Carvalho, it is the centralised control system for the armed forces in Portugal. For routine security work it can call on units loyal to the MFA.	PIDE	Alias DGS, one of the world's most notorious secret police forces. The only deaths on 25 April 1974 were caused by them in a last ditch stand at their HQ. Most of them are now in the prison they used for their political prisoners, Caxias, outside Lisbon.
FNLA	Angolan National Liberation Front, led by Holden Roberto: the most right wing of the Angolan movements, backed by Mobutu of Zaire and the CIA.	PPD	Popular Democrats - popular that is with the bourgeoisie, the Church, the conservative middle-peasants of the North, who to-gether gave them over 25% of the vote on 25 April. Ministers in every Provisional Government.
FRELIMO	Mozambique Liberation Movement.	Provisional Government	- a Cabinet of ministers drawn from the MFA, PCP, MDP, PPD and headed now by Vasco Goncalves. It is subordinate in every way to the Military Revolutionary Council.
FSP	Popular Socialist Front, led by Manuel Serra, is a left split from the PS.	PRP-BR	Proletarian Revolutionary Party was born out of the Revolutionary Brigades (BR) which as late as 9 April 1974 added another success to a three-year long campaign of sabotage and armed struggle by sinking a naval vessel about to sail for Guinea-Bissau. The PRP has been instrumental in the formation of the revolutionary workers councils.
GNR	National Republican Guard, a para-military national police force with a similar (fascist) reputation as the Guardia Civil in Spain. Once commanded by Spino-la.	PS	Socialist Party, led by Mario Soares, and a member of the Second (social democrat) International, and therefore linked to the Labour Party.
Intersindical	The Portuguese TUC, and heavily controlled by the PCP.	PSP	Para-military riot police, like the French CRS.
JSN	Junta of National Salvation, set up on 26 April 74: seven senior officers, including Spino-la, who chose them. It collapsed on March 11 because several members were involved in the coup.	PUP	marxist-leninist Popular Unity Party.
LCI	International Communist League, a sympathising organisation of the trotskyst 4th International. It won 11,000 votes in April elections.	UDP	marxist-leninist Popular Democratic Union.
LUAR	League of Revolutionary Unity and Action, one of the oldest left organisations, involved in armed struggle before April 74. Is still armed. A main instigator of military action against the attempted coups, and of house and land occupations.	UNITA	Reformist Angolan liberation movement.
MDM	Democratic Women's Movement, founded in 1968, is a group of women in the PCP and PS involved in women's struggles, but not feminist.	URML	marxist-leninist Revolutionary Union
MDP	Democratic Movement: stood opposition candidates in elections before 1974. Gained about 6% in April elections. Very close to the PCP.		Marcelo Caetano - replaced long-time dictator Salazar in 1968 and experimented with timid forms of liberalisation. Exiled to Brazil.
MES	Left Socialist Movement. Strong base in some sections of the working class, its politics are the far left of the Labour Party or the French PSU or maybe PDUP in Italy.		Otelo de Carvalho - a major at the time of the 25 April coup, which he commanded, is now military governor of Lisbon and head of COPCON.
MFA	Movement of the Armed Forces. Its 240-strong General Assembly has delegates elected from officers and non-commissioned ranks of all three services. The vanguard of the armed forces, it contains several political tendencies.		Costa Gomes - an old time mate of Spino-la, now President.
Military Revolutionary Council	- a group of nearly 30 officers which replaced the MFA's Coordinating Council (its central committee!), the JSN and the Council of State after 11 March.		Antonio Rosa Coutinho - prominent member of the MFA, linked to PCP.
MLM	Women's Liberation Movement.		Vasco Goncalves - Prime Minister, moderate and long time anti-Salazarist.
MPLA	Angolan Popular Liberation Movement, the most left of the three in Angola, 'marxist'.		Melo Atunes - MFA man responsible for foreign affairs in Cabinet.
MRPP	Movement for the Reorganisation of the Proletarian Party. Founded in 1970 to combat PCP revisionism. It was banned by the Government in March 1975. It is dogmatic in its characterisation of the PCP as social fascist, and supports the PS against them.		Palma Carlos - the first Prime Minister after 25 April, chosen by Spino-la. He was a conservative who tried to turn Spino-la into a De Gaulle in July 1974 and got the push from the MFA for his trouble.
PAIGC	The movement which waged the liberation struggle in Guinea-Bissau.		Salazar - ran Portugal as a fascist state from 1926 till 1968.
			Mario Soares - PS leader. Not a revolutionary!
			de Spino-la - hero figure among wide sections of the armed forces because of his military record in Guinea-Bissau (he turned a potential catastrophe into a disaster) and because he argued publicly for a political solution to the colonies in his book, Portugal & the Future, in it he called for a military withdrawal. He was involved in the attempted coups of September 74 and March 75. He fled to exile in Brazil.

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BIG FLAME

Big Flame is a revolutionary socialist group. We have printed this pamphlet on Portugal (and one on Chile, 'Chile Si') because it shows what can happen when an opportunity is taken where the creative revolutionary energy of the people is unleashed. We believe that this revolutionary energy exists in all countries, including our own.

We see it every time workers force their demands on management, tenants collectively win what they want from councils, women force the State to change its laws on contraception and abortion. This energy is, of course, present in the well-publicised strikes and occupations of car workers and miners. But it is also present in the less well-known struggles of local women fighting for a new nursery, of small factories that are occupied, of hospitals being forced to ban private patients, of residents forcing dangerous factories to close down.

In Big Flame, we believe that if the revolutionary process is to be successful these forgotten struggles will have to be included in the collective memory of the class.

So, when we talk of "vanguards of the class", we mean all sections of the working class who are in struggle, not just those powerful now at the point of production. We see Big Flame's role as contributing as much as we can to the bringing together of these class vanguards. We believe that this coming together and our victories at the expense of capitalism, are the revolutionary process. We do not think that a revolutionary party can be created by a few left-wing militants deciding to call themselves a party. Rather, we think that a revolutionary party will come about only when the different vanguards of the class are fighting on a unified programme.

Unlike other left-wing groups, Big Flame does not have a master figure to refer to for our ideas, theory, historical interpretation. We are not maoists, or Stalinists or Trotskyists.

We see ourselves as inheriting a revolutionary tradition which includes many revolutionaries, but we see their writings as the collective voice of the particular period of class struggle they were involved in. It's a tradition which also includes the revolutionary actions of working class people throughout history. Most recently, it includes May '68 in France, Autumn '69 in Italy, Chile 1970-73, and Portugal today. It is for this that we have put together this pamphlet. We hope it is of use.

Big Flame groups exist in London, Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool. We are active in hospitals, car and other factories, among students, housewives and tenants. We also work in the Troops Out movement and Chile Solidarity Campaign. Ireland, Car, Work Place and Womens Commissions exist to coordinate our work nationally.

Copies of this pamphlet (and our other publications) can be obtained from Bookshop 632, 632, Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, price 30p. including postage.

There are Big Flame groups in:

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OUR COMMON STRUGGLE

As we finish this pamphlet, it is becoming clear that international capitalism is trying to construct a strategy that will able it to prevent the continuing move to the left of Portugal and its ex-colonies!

In Africa, the strategy of imperialism is clearer;

1. to support the pro-imperialist 'liberation' movements in the Azores, Sao Tome and Principe.
2. to support the pro-imperialist movement (the FLEC) that wants Cabinda, which is where the oil is, to secede from Angola.
3. to support the FLNA and UNITA movements against the left-wing MPLA.



All these plots will be backed by the military might of imperialism in the hope that they can check the victories of the anti-imperialist forces in the African continent. In the meantime, the imperialists are co-ordinating their strategy with South Africa, which with Zaire is the main agent for imperialism on the continent.

As far as a strategy for Iberia goes, the imperialists are divided. The Yankees want Spain in NATO, Portugal out of NATO and preparations for an invasion of Portugal. For this reason they are helping the Portuguese Army of Liberation (the ELP) and the Spanish 'Fighters of Christ the King' who are savagely murdering Basque militants in Spain and France (with the co-operation of the French cops). The U'S' ambassador in Lisbon, Carlucci,

is a specialist in counter-revolutionary subversion. He operated in the Congo at the time of Lumumba's murder (connected with Zaire breaking away) and in Brazil between 1965-69 when thousands of militants were tortured and murdered. The other NATO countries are not keen on too close an alliance with Spain and are still hoping that social-democracy (Soares) will be able to regain control of the situation in Portugal. For this reason the 'Guardian' whines about the 'end of democracy in Portugal' although it did not complain of 50 years of cruel fascism.

This division in the imperialist forces and the fact that the Yankees' arrogance and self-assurance has been smashed for a while by the heroic victories of the



people of Indochina, gives the Portuguese revolutionary process time to strengthen itself. But there can be no doubt that as it becomes clear that Soares is a general without an army, the hawks in NATO will press for an intervention.

WHAT WE CAN DO

The April edition of *Our Common Struggle*, the bulletin of the Portuguese Workers Coordinating Committee, announced the launching of a solidarity campaign with the Portuguese working class. They say, *The Solidarity Campaign provides a base in Britain for mass organisation against the threat of NATO intervention or an economic boycott of Portugal, and to forge closer links between workers in Britain and Portugal.*
PWCC 18 Fleet Road London NW3

Take the first step and affiliate to the Campaign now.

A defeat of the Portuguese Working Class is a defeat for the whole of the labour movement in Europe.

- NO ECONOMIC BOYCOTT
- BIG BUSINESS, NATO, CIA — HANDS OFF PORTUGAL!
- PORTUGAL WILL NOT BECOME ANOTHER CHILE
- SUPPORT THE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN WITH THE PORTUGUESE WORKING CLASS

CHRONOLOGY 74/5

Demonstration
of 7th Feb.

Although our chronology begins in early 1974, we think we should record some of the actions which helped to bring down the fascist regime of Marcello Caetano.

Of the military actions, we should single out—

1961 the seizure of the liner Santa Maria on the high seas by anti-fascist army officers.

1971 the destruction of a secret NATO communications centre outside Lisbon, the first action carried out by units of the Revolutionary Brigades (now part of the revolutionary organisation, PRP, the Proletarian Revolutionary Party).

1974 the forerunner of 25 April: the unsuccessful advance on Lisbon by a military column under the command of Spínola army officers.

A long list of important working class and peasant struggles against fascism could begin in

1934 general strike in the Northern town of Marinha Grande.

1962 100,000 workers and students defy the law banning demonstrations; agriculture workers win an eight hour day.

1968 the year Caetano replaces Salazar (42 years as dictator) as well as the year of the transport workers strike in the British-owned firm, Carris; bus and tram conductors refuse to collect any fares (they repeat the tactic in Spring 1974).

1969 January: mass strike wave sweeps industrial centres
November: 5,000 shipyard workers occupy Lisnave yards, Lisbon.

1970 Beginning of the factory and work-place workers councils. Attempting to tie up workers' struggle Caetano allows first free elections for executives of the fascist trade unions. When the result is a left-wing take-over of 18 unions, government quickly invalidates the results. Then, shop bank, textile and engineering workers set up a joint body to fight for free elections, the Intersindical, which reflects the PCP's strength in the industrial working class.

And, finally, shortly after the Middle-East war in October 1974, there begins a national strike wave which has hardly subsided before...

April 21 Mozambique: FRELIMO attack threatens road and rail communications between the capital, Lourenço Marques and the main port, Beira.

April 25 In a coup organised by the Armed Forces Movement, the Caetano regime comes to a sudden end. The junior officers of the MFA announce a programme of social change to wipe out inequalities and backwardness, and promise free national elections within the year. An ex-colonial governor and army general, de Spínola, agrees to become President, and a Junta of National Salvation of senior officers is set up.

April 26 The DGS, alias the PIDE, the secret police, is disbanded. All political prisoners are released.

April 29 700 naval officers meet and decide to purge 82 admirals, supporters of the old regime.

May 1 Led by the leaders of the PCP and the PS, lately back from years of exile in Prague and Vienna, 100,000's march through Lisbon in May Day celebrated with red carnations and the chant of 'A People United Will Never be Defeated'.

May 7 Three women writers, the so-called Three Marias, are acquitted of obscenity charges over their book, *New Portuguese Letters*, which deals with the brutalisation of women in Portugal. The charges were laid before 25 April.

May 9 Provisional Government set up, including the leaders of the PCP and the PS, Cunhal and Soares.

May 29 Spínola warns that the upsurge of political and labour unrest could lead to an authoritarian clamp-down.

May 30 Intersindical leaders help to stop strikes by shipyard and bank workers, and to break strikes by bakers, bus and tram crews and fishermen; PCP begins to attack 'ultra-



- July 9 left provocateurs' who aim to re-establish fascism.
The Prime Minister resigns after he fails to win MFA and Junta to need for greater governmental powers and for presidential elections within 3 months to establish Spínola's authority. He also suggested postponing national elections for a year to allow the right wing parties time to find their feet.
- July 12 Government crisis resolved with selection of Vasco Gonçalves, an MFA moderate, as Prime Minister; Spínola's own candidate is rejected by the MFA. COPCON, a new centralised command system for all the Portuguese forces (some units are placed on standby for use as security force), is set up under the control of Otelo de Carvalho, one of the leaders of 25 April coup.
- July 17 Cyprus: Makarios Government overthrown in a Greek backed attempt to make the island safer for US imperialism.
- July 20 Cyprus: Turkey invades and rapidly occupies half the island; the puppet regime of Sampson disappears. 2 Officers, MES supporters, arrested for refusing to intervene against postal workers strike.
- July 21 Post Office strike ends with PCP slanders at a high pitch and the Government threatening military occupation.
- July 25 Merchant seamen's oil tanker go-slow ends when the Government threatens to mobilise them into the Navy.
Greece: In the aftermath of the Cyprus failure, the 7 year old Colonel's regime is replaced by a civilian caretaker administration under Karamanlis, pledged to holding free elections. (The uncertain situation in Cyprus added to the tension between Greece and Turkey has left the East Mediterranean end of NATO in poor shape — fortunately.)
- July 27 Much against his will, Spínola is compelled by the MFA to pronounce for immediate independence for all the colonies, following a reshuffle of the Provisional Govt. which strengthens the left of the MFA.
- August 2 Portugal recognises its former colony, Guinea-Bissau, as an independent republic.
- August 5 Luta Popular, newspaper of the marxist-leninist group, the MRPP (Movement for the Reorganisation of the Proletarian Party), falls foul of the new press law with its outspoken attacks on the MFA and Spínola. It is suspended indefinitely, but in fact continues to appear.
- August 8 USA: President Nixon resigns over Watergate affair.



August 12 Hundreds of PIDE agents detained in Caxias Prison, Lisbon, riot and it look as if they will get free, with the aid of the riot police, the PSP, who charge an anti-PIDE demonstration at the prison gates. But COPCON moves in and the PIDE are locked up again.

August 15 Government bans a demonstration in solidarity with MPLA and calling for immediate independence for Mozambique. The PSP open fire and one demonstrator dies.

August 27 Maintenance workers of TAP, the national airline, go on strike demanding the purging of fascists from the management.

August 29 New strike law outlaws occupations and sets up a 30 day cooling off period before strikes can begin; it is rarely enforced after the next month or so.

Sept. 6 Lusaka: Agreement signed in Zambian capital gives independence to Mozambique.

Sept. 8 Lourenco Marques: short-lived white settler revolt against Lusaka agreement put down by Portuguese and FRELIMO forces.

Sept. 12 Thousands of Lisnave workers defy the Government, the PCP, the Intersindical and a cordon of troops to march through Lisbon to demand the purging of all fascists.

Sept. 23 Supported by thousands of other workers, the TAP men demonstrate against military intervention in their strike.

Sept. 27 17 days after Spínola called for support for his moderate policies from what he calls the 'silent majority', workers throw up barricades on all main Lisbon approaches to prevent the entrance of arms and fascists who it is later revealed plan to use Spínola's Silent Majority rally the next day as cover for a coup.

Sept. 28 Under pressure from the working class, and the armed left groups, the MFA acts against the Silent Majority rally, banning it and arresting dozens of plotters.

Sept. 30 Following the arrest of many close associates, Spínola resigns and is replaced as President by his close buddy, General Costa Gomes.

Oct. 11 Council workers sit-in at Santarém administrative centre (demands: 40 hours, £25 minimum and purges) broken by COPCON.

Dec. 11 400 officer cadets demoted to the ranks for going on hunger strike in support of 8 cadets arrested after attending revolutionary meeting.

Dec. 13 US agrees to supply \$75m. aid for housing, education, health, transport and agriculture.

1975

Jan. 14 80,000 demonstrate in Lisbon for a single trade union, federation, Intersindical, as PS and PPD fight for separate political federations.

Jan. 15 Angolan independence agreed as from 11 November

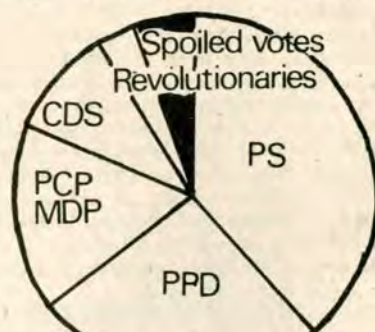
Jan. 20 Government votes for single union federation.

Jan. 26 CDS (right wing party) rally in Oporto attacked by left. British Tory delegates escape to tell their tales.

Feb. 7 As NATO exercise off Portugal ends, 40,000 in march organised by Inter-empresa (committee linking about 40 workers councils in Lisbon area) denounce unemployment and NATO.

Feb. 9 30,000 farm workers gather in Southern town of (in Alentejo region, traditional base of the PCP) to demand the confiscation of properties of anybody

- Feb. 18** involved in economic sabotage or the attempted coups. Government reaches agreement with Vatican on new divorce rights for Church marriages.
- Feb. 21** With elections due on 12 April, MFA postpones start of campaign to lessen chances of disorder.
- March 7** Police kill one demonstrator in clash outside PPD rally in the industrial centre of Setubal, South-West of Lisbon
- March 11** Attempted coup fails after half-hearted air attack on barracks of 1st Light Artillery Regiment (RAL 1, the 'red' regiment), outside Lisbon. Spínola, General Galvão de Melo flee to exile and Sanches Osório, minister in the first Provisional Government and leader of the PDC (Christian Democratic Party) disappears (de Melo is arrested on the Spanish border).
- March 12** Meeting of the National Junta (less de Melo!), and the MFA's coordinating committee and general assembly decides to disband all three bodies and to set up in their place a Supreme Revolutionary Council. The general assembly will be reformed to give representation to the NCO's and other ranks. Also decided to disarm the GNR of its more lethal weapons.
- March 14** With the banks taken over by the workers, the Government decides to nationalise all banks other foreign-owned and agricultural credit institutions, as well as insurance companies (except foreign-owned).
- March 18** Three parties banned from election campaign - PDC; MRPP and AOC, on the left - and elections put off till 25 April. 4000 MRPP supporters defy ban and demonstrate in Lisbon.
- March 20** As right-wing US Senator James Buckley calls Portugal the most dangerous communist threat to the West and calls on President Ford to consider ways of keeping her within the Western fold, there are reports of NATO manoeuvres around Portugal, including Green Jackets alert for possible mobilisation for Portugal.
- March 25** 4th Provisional Government; Soares loses foreign ministry to Major Melo Antunes.
- March 28** MRPP banned for refusing to remove hammer and sickle emblem from banners (PCP says that it causes confusion with theirs). More than 75 MRPP's arrested in March and April.
- April 17** Khmer Rouge occupies Phnom Penh, ending war in Cambodia.
- April 19** 2 day Lisbon Congress to set up revolutionary workers councils, organised by PRP.
- April 25** 6 million vote in elections for constituent assembly, although everyone knows that the MFA intends to hang on to effective power for the foreseeable future.



Proportions of the Vote for each Party

- May 1** Mario Soares makes unsuccessful attempt to speak at May Day rally organised by Intersindical and PCP. Saigon taken by Viet Cong.
- May 6** Soares and Cunhal meet to discuss differences.
- May 20** Communist Party printworkers on the traditionally PS daily, *República*, take the paper over, but MFA closes it down and both sides produce pirate editions.
- May 29** Vasco Gonçalves tries to reassure NATO summit about Portugal's good intentions, whilst Neto leader of the MPLA, denounces the MFA's criminal failure to act in Angola against FNLA provocations.
- COPCON raids the offices of MRPP and carries out dozens of arrests.

TOWARDS THE REVOLUTION



YEAR ONE

'Thank you, army,' says the slogan on the gun. But it's not so simple a year later. The armed forces have become a political battleground: soldiers fighting against officers' privileges; supporters of Cuban-style Committees for the Defence of the Revolution v. supporters of Revolutionary Workers Councils.

WHY PORTUGAL MATTERS

Now that Portugal has taken a route which may lead to socialism, we no longer hear the drivel about 'our oldest ally' which was current when Caetano, the prime minister of Europe's oldest fascist regime, made his state visit to see the Queen. Of course, it is true that for several hundred years Portugal was almost a British colony, supplying our aristocracy with fine vintage port in return for military support against Napoleonic France. One result of that link is that Britain is one of the main importers of Portuguese goods (Marks and Spencer have their shirts made there), as well as being one of the main sources of investment in Portugal.

The anxiety of the British capitalists for their Portuguese investments has grown steady in the months since the overthrowing of fascism by the military coup of 25 April 1974. Textiles, the port producers and property have all been threatened by the growth of Portuguese working class power. Strikes and occupations have occurred in British-owned factories like Plessey. One result of this may be to have closed Portugal as an escape route for British capitalists who want to transfer production to somewhere where labour is cheaper and more easily disciplined.

There are others. The prospect of a victory for communism in Portugal coming so soon after the setbacks to American imperialism in South East Asia and around the Mediterranean is already proving to be very unsettling for the British ruling class. Their nerve is already strained and the idea that Portu-

gal could set off a wave of capitalist defeats in Europe is very worrying for them. If they lose their confidence about their future, their demoralisation may aid our victory here.

Finally, Portugal matters to us because we know that the struggle which is developing there cannot only teach us a lot, but act as an encouragement to us in our fight as well.

THE DOMINO WORKS

There is abundant evidence that what happens in Portugal is a cause for great concern for capitalism and its armed forces. In fact, now that Portuguese capitalism itself is in retreat, we can say that the main military threat to the revolution there is no longer internal. Just before the last attempted coup on 11 March, seven thousand unidentified troops landed at the US Navy base of Rota in southern Spain (the editor of the Spanish newspaper who published this news has been imprisoned); two RAF squadrons were put on alert, together with army units, whilst NATO ships carried out exercises off the Portuguese coast. It seems that the role of the unsuccessful rising was to provide a pretext for NATO forces to enter the country to prevent a threat to their nationals and their property. But the coup was squashed too fast for there to be time for a military intervention. It may not happen like this again.

The next attempt is likely to be more carefully prepared because in the weeks which have passed since March, the US has suffered its worst setback since the Cuban revolution, with the victory of communist forces first in Cambodia,

then in rapid succession in Vietnam, Laos, and maybe soon in Thailand. One of the strongest arguments advanced for its involvement in Vietnam by the Pentagon was exactly that if the US pulled out of the war a communist victory could quickly spread throughout South East Asia. This was called the domino theory. And now the whole world knows its true.

It takes little imagination to see that the domino could work in Europe too. In the past year, the imperialist alliance around the Mediterranean has started to crumble. Since the abortive Greek invasion of Cyprus last August, first Cyprus, then Greece and Turkey have loosened the grip of NATO. (Cyprus is no longer a secure military base. Military aid has been cut off from Turkey for its counter-invasion of the island; and the new Greek government has given the US its marching orders from its bases there.)

Two other European members of NATO, other than Portugal, are considered by the US military planners to be at risk to communism because of the weakness of their economies and the strength of their working class – Italy and Britain. In addition, Spain, which the US would like to see in NATO instead of Portugal, could very easily take the same road as Portugal. So, if the domino theory is proved correct in Europe, it could mean the end of not just NATO, but capitalism itself, leaving the US isolated in the world. This is why US and European capitalism cannot allow 'Portuguese to go communist because of their irresponsibility of its people', as Henry Kissinger once remarked about Chile.

It's worth remembering that the immediate cause of the military coup of 25 April 1974 in Portugal was the success of the liberation forces in the colonies against the Portuguese army. One of the first acts of the new Portuguese regime was to grant independence to its former colonies. The consequence of this was to begin another domino effect in Africa. Imperialism has abandoned its fight for Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, but it refuses to give up the oil and mineral wealth of Angola without a struggle. That is why it has backed the phoney liberation movement, the FNLA, led by Holden Roberto, against the left-wing MPLA. If there is a civil war in Angola this year, it will be because of this intervention.

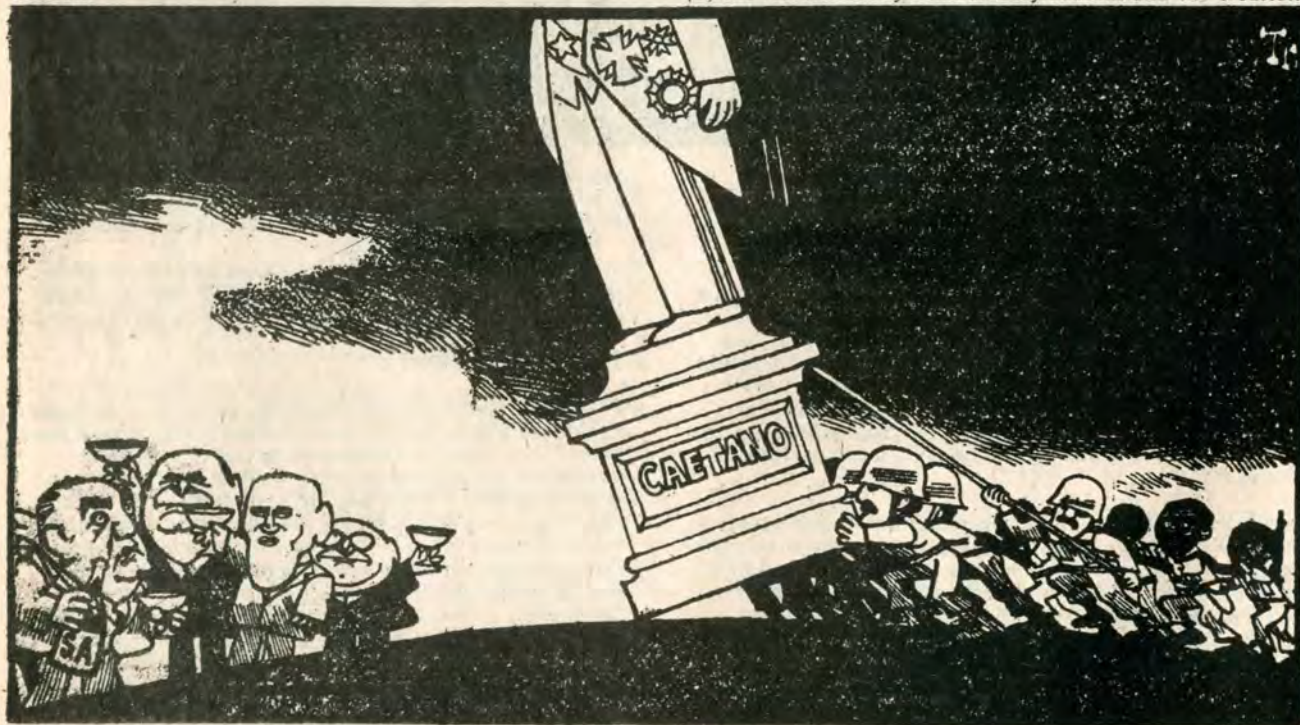
One lesson of all this for us in Britain is that we must begin to build here a solidarity movement with the Portuguese working class, and try to prevent our NATO forces from being used to install a right wing regime in Portugal. We have learnt a lot from what happened in Chile to know that imperialism may use other than the most blatant military means for defeating the working class. For the moment, the imperialist forces will step up their economic sabotage of Portugal in the hope that this will create confusion amongst the less conscious sections of the working class, as it did in Chile, and perhaps lead to a strengthening of the pro-capitalist forces: the remaining capitalists, the leaders of the Socialist Party, and the social democratic PPD, as well as among some of the military.

Today, in Portugal, they are using the methods they perfected in Chile: a strike of production and investment – moving capital and plant out of the country, which can lead to shortages, inflation, black marketeering and social unrest. But, as we shall see later, the Portuguese working class has also learnt the lessons of Chile and is taking steps to ensure that these methods of sabotage will not work again.

THE RESULTS OF 25 APRIL

To understand how we've reached this situation, we should look at developments in Portugal since the overthrowing of fascism last year. The military coup, which took place on 25 April, was organised by a group of young army officers, together with colleagues in the Navy and Air Force. They did it to rid their country of a regime which had led them into a disastrous war in Africa, to which they saw there was only one political solution – independence for the colonies – which had milked the home economy and condemned the majority of the people to low wages and appalling living standards; long years of dangerous military service for the men, or, alternatively, to exile abroad as immigrant workers in scarcely better conditions.

These officers, organised as the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), announced a programme to the Portuguese people on 25 April which had two main points: (1) colonial independence and the immediate ending of the African wars, (2) the restoration of democratic freedoms and the creation



It is clear too that if the MPLA does take power in Angola, South Africa's days as the bastion of white capitalist 'civilisation' in Africa will be numbered. Already, as a result of events in Mozambique, South Africa has been compelled to withdraw its military support for Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) as the price of reaching a temporary truce with black Africa.

of a kind of welfare state with the resources saved from the war.

These officers, who formed a small proportion of the total officer corps, had in mind for Portugal the creation of a more just society, which would allow the one and a half million

Portuguese living abroad to return to live decently, and most of them believed that such a society could be similar to the other capitalist societies in Europe with parliamentary regimes. So they also promised that within the year elections would be held to constitute a democratic civilian government. Few of them imagined that they had begun a process which would quickly lead to posing the question of whether the society they wanted could be a capitalist one.

But the immediate aftermath of the coup was an enormous wave of working class struggles which rapidly forced the first Provisional Government to raise the minimum wage. Another demand of this movement was for the purging of fascist managements and officials. The struggle for higher wages and purges posed the MFA and its government with a dilemma because it threatened both to go far beyond the officers' plans for restoring democracy and to undermine the basis of capitalism itself. After all, it could be said that every manager and official was a fascist supporter and if they were all purged then the capitalist class itself would be purged out of existence. All this was underlined by the widespread demand for workers' control, especially in factories which were subsidiaries of multinational corporations who threatened to move their factories abroad. Wage demands tended to be fantastic and seemed likely to wipe out the attraction of cheap Portuguese labour for foreign capitalists. In short, the workers' movement which had been set in motion by the coup was tending to put in question the existence of capitalism.

The MFA's response to this was twofold. On the one hand, strikes and occupations, especially in essential industries, were increasingly met with by military intervention; striking postal workers were threatened with conscription if they persisted. On the other hand, plans were laid to make the working class struggle more orderly by setting up means for negotiation, and by beginning to establish some form of parliamentary system.

This is not how things have turned out in Portugal for two main reasons. In the first place, the months after 25 April saw the working class flexing its muscles and gaining in confidence and understanding, after nearly fifty years of repression, so that the strongest sections refused to allow themselves to be defeated by the government. In September 1974 military occupation and arrests failed to stop the struggle of the TAP (Portuguese state airline) maintenance workers, and merely brought support from the backbone of the Lisbon industrial workers, the Lisnave shipyard workers, who came together in a demonstration through the city in defiance of the government, the Communist Party, and the troops sent to stop them.

It's important to realise that whilst in the early days of the new regime the MFA had represented in the main the officers, the growth of the working class movement was beginning to have repercussions in the barracks among the NCOs and ordinary soldiers and sailors. A certain reluctance was growing to involvement in military strikebreaking, and none of the soldiers sent to halt the Lisnave workers stood their ground when they heard the chants of 'soldiers - sons of the people' and 'a people united will never be defeated', the exultant slogan of the massive May Day demonstration of 1974.

The second reason is that the speeding up in the momentum of the development of the mass working class movement was seized on by the right wing and the supporters of the deposed Caetano regime to attempt to carry out a counter-coup early in September 1974. The aim of the coup was to check the advance of communism, dismember the left of the MFA, and strengthen the position of the President, Spínola.

The failure of the coup brought about a large shift in the balance of class forces. Spínola, the best hope for the right, resigned; many officers and businessmen implicated in the attempted coup fled abroad or were arrested. The balance inside the MFA also shifted strongly to the left.

The working class was given a boost by the failure of the coup, partly because of the mass mobilisations of civilians

to prevent the entry of right wing forces into Lisbon. On the night of 27 September, armed members of the workers' organisations had thrown up road blocks on all the approach roads to the city.

The fact that the coup had even been attempted meant a setback for those in the working class and the MFA who had envisaged a peaceful transition to a democratic parliamentary form of capitalism after fifty years of capitalism. It had become clear that certain sections of Portuguese capitalism constituted a formidable obstacle to such a prospect. They would fight to the end against any weakening of their economic and political power.

WORKING CLASS POWER

The unsuccessful coup of 11 March had similar effects to the September revolt, only more so. The difference was that this time Spínola was forced to flee to political asylum in Brazil, where he rejoined the exiled Caetano.

The 11 March produced a backlash against the capitalist order. The bosses of the major monopolies, banks and insurance companies were arrested or escaped abroad and their possessions were nationalised. The two biggest monopolies, CUF and Champalimaud, and the banks and insurance companies were taken over by the workers and then the nationalisation was made official by the government. Hundreds of officers were arrested or retired from service. Even more than in September, members of the left organisations and the workers' movement were prominent in the rapid defeat of the coup and in the arrests which followed: without the rapid initiatives of the workers' organisations, it's possible that things might have gone differently because on both occasions the MFA's response was sluggish.



11 March 1975: armed workers' check-point on northern Lisbon highways.

The aftermath of the coup saw a new wave of strikes and occupations, as the working class went on the offensive against the capitalist class. Unoccupied villas were taken over for use by the people as nurseries, health centres, leisure centres, libraries and places to live. In the countryside, aided by the revolutionary armed brigades - PRP and LUAR - the workers and their families occupied the great estates. Large sections of industry and agriculture were taken out of the control of the capitalists and run by the workers or nationalised under the control of the state and the MFA.

Another vital consequence of 11 March is the acceleration of the revolution inside the armed forces, with the broadening of the MFA's decision-making institutions to include the NCOs and soldiers. Under pressure from the base, profound changes are taking place in the MFA's thinking. The role of the armed forces themselves is being re-thought. Carvalho warns against the danger of NATO



intervention and argues that the army must transform itself into a guerilla force to counter the threat. Many in the MFA now see the job of the armed forces as protecting the development towards communism, and in helping to prepare the people for this. These ideas, together with the experience of the civilian mobilisations after 11 March, which the MFA encouraged, accelerate the growth of joint organisations of civilians and soldiers. The revolutionary organisation of the PRP calls a conference of soldiers, workers, housewives and students which begins to look like the workers and soldiers soviets which were the organisational form of the Russian revolutions of 1905, 1917 and of the failed Hungarian Revolution in 1956. These are definite steps towards ensuring that the armed forces will not be used to defeat the working class, as they were in Chile.

One result of the growth in working class power after 11 March is to prevent the establishment of the political bodies which are the norm in parliamentary capitalist societies like Britain and France. The clearest expression of this comes with the national elections of 25 April.

In a turn out of over ninety percent, the Socialist Party, led by Mario Soares, gained thirty-eight percent of the votes, and the social democratic PPD a further twenty-six percent. The Communist Party and its sister organisation the MDP won a total of under seventeen percent, and the parties further to the left picked up the rest between them. Of course, for the left to gain a majority and for the revolutionary left to win the votes of hundreds of thousands of people is extraordinary in the normal run of elections, even in Italy where the Communist Party is the second largest party after the Christian Democrats. And yet, it is clear that the election results do not really correspond to the reality of the power of the anti-capitalist working class movement in Portugal.

The election results show us the contrast between two different kinds of power – one expressed through the ballot box, and one through the struggle of the working class. The ballot box result is the one which tends to favour capitalism, always. Why is this?

In the first place it has to be remembered that in a country with no recent experience of free elections, much of the population, especially in the rural areas, have limited political understanding. In the countryside – in the north above all – peasants and farm workers are more open to the influence of the Church and the landowners than to the revolution. Second, the proportion of the population involved in the political developments of the past year has been small. The revolution, until now, has been primarily confined to the industrial centres in a society which is one of the most rural in all Europe.

The industrial working class, that section of the population which has had most to gain from the revolution and most involved in its development, is overall a minority. Its votes were shared between the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the organisations to the left. Many of these voters may very well have been involved in struggle and yet still reluctant to commit themselves to an anti-capitalist alternative. This has always been the nature of working class consciousness in a situation of profound political and social change. When, only weeks after ten million working class people had taken part in a wave of strikes and occupations which shook capitalism to its roots in May 1968, De Gaulle called an election as a vote of confidence in himself, the result was a resounding victory for him and a defeat of the left. In Chile, too, the Socialist President, Salvador Allende, never managed to gain an electoral majority even at a time when the strength of the working class was unprecedented.

The working class always builds its power through struggle, not by delegating that power to others. This is why the capitalists always resort to the ballot box when their power is fundamentally challenged by the working class. It is also why we say that the revolution cannot be won by the ballot box. At best, and this is what we've seen in Portugal, a parliamentary socialist party will gain a majority, as the Labour Party did in Britain in 1945, 1950, 1964, 1966 and 1972. But that party will never be committed to a revolutionary programme. It will even be supported by some sections of

the capitalists themselves as the best way of bringing the working class to order, and to demobilise its struggle.

The Socialist Party emerged from the elections of the 25 April 1975 as the most popular party, but with its support drawn from two quite different class bases – from the capitalists, small businessmen, professional sections and officers, as well as from the working class. Given that its most left wing section, the FSP, had broken away to fight the elections independently on an anti-capitalist platform, the Socialist Party was now confirmed as the party of those sections which favoured the continuation of capitalism in Portugal.

Some other facts of Portuguese life have to be remembered too. In the first place, apart from the PCP, none of the parties has deep roots. Most are one year old. There is a great deal of confusion about politics, especially in the countryside. Many people may have voted socialist simply because this is the word that the MFA uses so frequently to describe its long-term goals.

THE ARMED FORCES AND SOCIALISM

The situation of the armed forces in Portugal, as the whole situation, presents us with a new experience which doesn't fit too easily into any previous models that we may have taken from history. We have to try to examine this situation without too many blinkering preconceptions.



Workers demonstrate against right-wing parties.

The armed forces has undergone a lightning-politicisation in the space of little more than a year. In the beginning, the MFA's programme was written by men who believed that they could relieve their country of its political and social backwardness. It's only recently that they've learnt that their original aims could not be put into effect in a capitalist economy simply because any marked shift of economic and political power away from the capitalists would be bitterly resisted by some sections of the ruling class. So, rapidly they have come to see that the choice lies between a kind of state-managed capitalism, but capitalism nonetheless, and revolutionary socialism – direct workers' control at every level of society.

It would be wrong to say that the whole of the MFA has come to these conclusions, and equally wrong to believe that there is no longer any possibility of the Portuguese armed forces taking part in a Chilean type defeat of the working class. At the same time, it won't do to try to understand them as a kind of Peruvian or Ethiopian or Egyptian military regime.

That this is true should be clear from some of the articles about the armed forces published here. Some sections of the armed forces have obviously gone so far in their commitment to the revolution that it is nonsense to suggest that they could ever save their skins in the event of a foreign-backed right wing coup. This applies particularly to the 1st ('red') Light Artillery Regiment of Lisbon (RAL1), which bore the brunt of the assault of the counter-coup on 11 March. The members of this regiment are involved in a process of politicisation which includes the officers and involves the deepening of links with the revolutionary left: links which were forged at the time of the 11 March. It also applies to officers like Carvalho who have made public their own commitment to the revolution and want to transform the armed forces into a people's militia.

As time has gone on, COPCON, the MFA's security unit, has become less and less willing to take part in interventions against strikes and occupations. Many military units have instead turned themselves into agents in the popular education campaign, which is aimed at bringing the revolution to the darkest corners of rural Portugal, to counteract the effects of half a century of fascism and centuries of almost feudal conditions under the influence of the Church and the landowners. And after some units made their offer on 11 March to arm the people, and the armed brigades have openly liaised with the soldiers, it is no wonder that the slogan of the first May Day has now been altered to 'an armed people will never be defeated'.

STATE CAPITALISM v. WORKING CLASS POWER

The first edition of the MFA's newspaper, *Movimento*, after the April elections declares: 'In the current phase of the revolutionary process, there has to be set up at all levels structures through which the people can participate directly in the exercise of political power, in the running of the administration and the economy. Popular power has to be developed at local, regional, factory and district levels, in the agricultural areas and in the cities... In fact, democratic socialism is not formal voting plus nationalisation, instead it is popular power forged by the action of the masses and the organised working class, exercised through democratic and revolutionary structures that relate to the various bodies of the state.'

This statement is a measure of the distance that the left of the MFA has travelled since 25 April last year. It also expresses sharply the difference between the perspectives offered by the revolutionary wing of the working class and the reformism of the Socialist Party.

Capitalism is close to extinction in Portugal. The momentum of the anti-capitalist movement now threatens to wipe out the whole basis of the class society.

In case Portuguese workers are confused about the real difference between nationalisation and workers' power in a socialist economy, the PCP and the PCP-dominated Inter-sindical (TUC) have been making it crystal clear. Whilst they support strikes and workers' demands in private industry and against the landowners, they are hostile to similar activities in nationalised industries – now about sixty-five to seventy percent of all the economy – and criticise them in the name of the MFA's 'Battle for Production'. They ask the working class to believe that a nationalised industry is somehow their own.

But even one hundred per cent nationalisation doesn't equal socialism unless the whole economy is directly controlled by the workers so that goods and services are produced according to the needs expressed by the working class as a whole. This would mean that Portugal would have to cut itself off from normal international capitalist trading relationships – taking over all foreign capital and refusing to honour debts abroad.

It would also involve changes in the organisation of work in the whole economy – abolition of the traditional hierarchy and grading differences in the workplace; equalisation of wages; ending all the social, sexual and racial divisions which capitalism has imposed on the working class for its own benefit.

FINALLY, THE QUESTION OF POWER

After two attempted right-wing coups, and the everlasting danger of others, what should be obvious is that workers' power cannot be established over the economy unless at the same time it is felt as state power. It would be tragically mistaken to believe that Portuguese capitalism will bow out when the last factory or the last great estate is taken over by the working class.

In there is any state organisation still under its control which can be used against the Portuguese revolution, capitalism will use it. And if there isn't, it won't shrink from armed invasion by NATO. Cuba coped with this eventuality – the Bay of Pigs landing in 1961 – partly because its armed forces were already committed to the new revolutionary order. But that isn't the situation in Portugal today.

The purging of fascists has been far from thoroughgoing, except in the Navy and in press and TV. The MFA militants have been reluctant to allow the purges to go too far for fear of antagonising the moderates in the MFA, and perhaps therefore forcing them into the arms of the right. We can see that the attempted coups have come about when the moderates felt most threatened by the campaign for purges. But we should also see that it is the working class which has been the leader in pushing forward the purges, and in pushing the MFA to the left. After 11 March, the MFA was forced to change its three-year economic plan when workers took over the banks. Suddenly, nationalisation of the banks and insurance, which only weeks before had been defeated in the MFA general assembly, was a matter of fact.

Again, the civilian armed brigades – of the PCP, LUAR UAR and PRP – seized the initiative on 27 September and 11 March when the armed forces wavered before the right-wing threat, and set up road blocks around the capital. It was then, and only then, that some MFA officers talked about arming the masses. Looking back, we can see that it is the mass initiatives – the strike waves, the occupations, the road-blocks, the arrests of fascists – which have pushed the MFA further to the left, as well as uniting the working class at a new level of political consciousness.

It is the old tactical lesson amply proven – that if the left takes the initiative, it can not only defeat its enemies but also unite its own forces.

The consequence is that, where the left is strong, the purge has been most thorough, and vice versa. As a result, some of the strongholds of fascism are still almost intact. To begin at the top, the President of the Republic, Costa Gomes, possesses three impressive reactionary qualifications: he is an old friend of Spínola (with whom he still consorted until the latter fled to exile); he is an ex-junior military minister under Salazar, and he was once commander of the GNR, the right wing National Republican Guard.

It was to the GNR's Lisbon barracks that Caetano fled on 25 April. And it was to the same barracks that one of the leaders of the 11 March coup went to take over command of the GNR. It was the GNR who connived at the break out of PIDE agents from Caxias prison on 12 August. Also relatively untouched by the purges is the PSP – the riot police.

To all these, we must add several thousand officers who didn't belong to the MFA, and the many thousands of NCOs and other ranks who might be prepared to follow them if an opportunity presented itself. And we must take into account the balance of forces within the MFA itself. Apart from the most forceful section, which is already committed to the revolution, there are powerful groups who believe that there are slower routes to the same point. Some of these support the PS, some back the PCP. What the last two groups have in common is their failure to understand that it is the speed of development of working class power which is the key to everything in Portugal today.

What could hold up that development – and the best hope for all those who want to halt the revolutionary process in Portugal – are the parties which won the most votes in the elections; the PS and the PPD. Both are strongly tied to

social democracy. Soares, in particular, has received a lot of support not only from his political allies abroad – Callaghan, Schmidt and other prominent social democrats – but also from right-wing capitalists.

Some of the PS' electoral support has come from working-class people who have been put off by the PCP. Its constant strike-breaking, its attempts to use the intersindical and its crude attempts to censor the press have disillusioned and confused many working-class people.

The CP totally over-estimated the electoral support it would gain and now is trying to avoid the consequences of its electoral defeat, but at the same time it has to try and make sure that it is not out flanked on the left by the development of grass-root organs of power.

As the PCP has been trying to decide whether or not it wants to form a popular front with the PS, the marxist-leninists of the MRPP have used the situation to attempt to rupture relations between the PCP and the MFA.

Up till now, the situation has been that the moderates in the MFA have been close to the PCP whilst the left-wing of the MFA (elements in COPCON such as RAL 1) has been close to the revolutionary groups, LUAR and PRP. But as Carvalho makes clear in his interview, they have been able to work constructively together. The MRPP's actions in the last few days (end of May) have forced out into the open the divisions within the MFA in a situation where it is uncertain whether the left will win. What they did was to arrest soldiers and civilians whom they said were fascists, hold them for a while (torture them?) and then hand them over to RAL 1. They also accused some officers of being fascists.

It was obvious that the MFA could not accept this situation and although some of RAL 1 and Copcon supported the initiative of the MRPP, they had to accept the MFA majority decision to arrest MRPP leaders. It is quite clear that by its adventurist tactics and its purely tactical alliance with the SP, the MRPP has provided the PCP and its supporters in the MFA with a golden opportunity.

In the weeks to come, the PCP will be in a hurry to crush whatever opposition it can and to assert its control over the workers movement. In this situation, it is essential that the vanguards of the working-class come together with the vanguards inside the forces. As the wrangling between the PCP, the PS and the MRPP gets worse, there are more and more people in Portugal who are coming to see themselves as 'without party'.

At the general assembly of the MFA of May 26th, two projects were put forward. One by the moderates to create 'Councils for the defense of the Revolution' which would exist in factories and districts side by side with the existing mass organizations (the parties), the other by the left to create 'revolutionary councils of workers' that would be the organs of direct democracy in the factories, barracks, districts: they would control production, local government and also function as a local militia. The unions and the parties would be made redundant by this self-organization of the working class.

The danger of the PCP and the MRPP sectarianism is that it could easily rebound against the other revolutionary left groups. Some sections of the vanguard of the working class might decide, quite wrongly, that they can do without the political leadership these groups have provided and which has been so vital in the revolutionary process.

The job of these groups now is to provide a political alternative to the PCP, PS as well as the dogmatic marxist-leninists inside the mass vanguards of the working class. It is also to ensure that the class struggle within the armed forces doesn't falter and that it produces a strengthening of the left wing of the MFA away from the moderates in some units, and towards the revolutionary vanguards of the working class. These groups have a long way to go – their roots in the struggle are still fairly shallow – but we believe that they can help to maintain the revolutionary momentum which has already carried Portugal so far in little over a year.

WORKERS POWER



In another article in this pamphlet, we have stressed the importance of the African movements of liberation in bringing about the fall of fascism in Portugal. Two other factors were also very important –

1 – 1958-1962, the working-class struggle inside Portugal. There were the massive anti-fascist mobilisations of this period organised by the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP). On one of these demos, troops opened fire and murdered eleven proletarians. In 1973 there was a wave of strikes that included the Lisnave shipyards, TAP, and the Lisbon Bus Company (where workers went on strike by refusing to collect fares, but continued to run the buses!). In these strikes, the workers were able to play on the bosses' shortage of labour to raise wages and get better conditions. In the electronic and textile factories, the bosses' way to deal with the shortage of men workers (they were either in the army or emigrated) was bringing women into the workforce. Unfortunately for them, the women workers were just as militant, and women workers in the electronic plants became a vanguard sector as the strike-wave spread.

2 – The struggles of Portuguese emigrant workers. The

largest number of Portuguese emigrant workers went to France (over one million by 1973). With eight hundred thousand Portuguese, Paris was the second largest Portuguese city! The left-wing organisations were very active in France, especially the PCP, the Marxist-Leninists and a PRP front. For many Portuguese workers it was their first opportunity to be involved in class struggle. Supported by French revolutionaries, Portuguese workers successfully fought French government attempts to bulldoze the shantytowns they lived in. On another occasion, Portuguese workers at Simca dragged two PIDE agents, who worked with them in the factory, through the streets of Poissy (near Paris) with placards around their necks. Of course, only a minority of the emigrants became militants, the majority were still more concerned with saving enough money to buy a piece of land back home.

Since the 25 April^{} Since the fall of fascism, the class struggle in the workplaces has gathered momentum continually. In order to*

** For the period until February, see the first five issues of Our Common Struggle, the article in Big Flame Journal (No 1), and Blackburn in New Left Review, 87-88.*

understand now the situation is developing, it is important to see the different situations different sections of the proletariat found themselves in after 25 April:



1 – Industrial workers of the large Portuguese companies (CUF, Champalimaud, etc.): for workers in these companies, the struggle has continually centred around the purging of fascists. In every attempt of the Right to regain power, the management and owners of these companies have been implicated – they were the financial interests that Spínola represented. After Spínola was forced out, these companies, CUF, Espírito Santo, etc., have been actively engaged in economic sabotage and the workers in them have forced the government to take them into the state sector. CUF, the last remaining large private monopoly company, was nationalised in May.

2 – Industrial workers in the small and medium Portuguese companies: in many cases, the owners of these companies have not been financially able to meet the minimum wage agreements that the workers forced the provisional governments to legally enforce. Many of these companies have gone bust and the owners disappeared. In these situations, the workers have taken the factories over and run them as a co-operative. Sometimes this has not been possible and the workers have become unemployed. Very many small and medium sized companies relied for making profit on fascist forms of control, and they have not been able to survive in the 'democratic' conditions that have existed since 25 April. They employed the large majority of workers and their failure in the new conditions is the main economic reason why the MFA has been forced to see that social-democracy ('welfare' capitalism) is not a possibility in Portugal.

For the interests of UK companies in Portugal see the pamphlet 'Financial Interests' by CFMAGB, 12 Little Newport St, London WC2

3 – Industrial workers in companies belonging to foreign (multinational) firms: in the majority of cases, these companies were financially able and were prepared to meet the

workers' demands for higher wages. Some of the multinationals were only in Portugal because of the low wages – these companies are running down their Portuguese plants and going somewhere else (e.g. Plessey transferring its production to Malta). Those multinationals which planned to sell what they manufactured in their Portuguese plants inside Portugal are still there (e.g. Unilever). Since most of their management is foreign, they have not been that much affected by the fascist purges. They have been the sector of the economy that the government and the MFA have been the most protective towards – they are the financial interests behind the Socialist Party.

4 – Industrial and service workers in the state sector. As companies go bankrupt or are taken over by workers, the state sector of the economy is growing very fast. Until February 1975, the attitude of government/MFA towards the state sector workers was very much under the influence of the PCP – workers in the state sector (and the nationalised industries) had no class enemy as boss and therefore were not allowed to strike. Under the influence of the PCP, the MFA intervened to smash the strikes of the TAP workers, the postal workers, etc. As more and more private sector workers became public sector workers as their company was nationalised, the CP's control of the unions of public sector workers was limited, and at the same time the MFA was no longer prepared to accept the CP's advice to smash workers in the public sector. The 'voluntary day of labour' the government called for on 4 October was another CP initiative. The way the workers, led by the post office workers, dismissed this anti-working class idea shows that they are quickly learning to assess for themselves the suggestions of the CP and the provisional government.

The situation of the agricultural proletariat is examined in the introduction to the section on social struggles.

From this too short summary, we can see that different sectors of the proletariat have to fight the class struggle in very different conditions: what unites all these sectors is that they are all on the offensive and winning. There is no magic formula that can make sense of what is happening throughout the country as a whole, and, not surprisingly, there is no one political revolutionary organisation that has been able to unite all these sectors. As far as industrial workers are concerned, one can say that they are slowly coming to see that their class interests are different from those of organisations like the CP, the Provisional Government and the MFA (as a whole), and that to defend these interests they need totally independent (autonomous) forms of organisation.

The translations in this section are all from February 1975 or later. They have been chosen so as to show the variety and richness of the work place struggle. They are all descriptions of the process of building independent forms of organisation that the Portuguese working class is involved in.

They are taken from the French paper Liberation.

NATO & UNEMPLOYMENT OUT!

This march, against unemployment, is extremely important because it is the first mass event organised by the Workers' Commissions, which in February existed in thirty-seven factories in the Lisbon area. In most cases, it is the Workers' Commissions that represent the workers in their dealings with management, rather than the CP-dominated Intersyndical. Given its behaviour in the summer of 1974, many workers begin to feel that the Intersindical is there to break their struggle and not to support it. They therefore feel the need for their own factory organisations independent of any political party (the Portuguese word is 'without party'). The Workers' Commissions are the result of this need. Delegates from the thirty-seven Workers' Commissions of the Lisbon area meet weekly at an interfactory meeting – the one on the 27 January decides on the 7 February march. The CP knows that the organ it controls, the Intersindical, is being

by-passed by the Workers' Commissions. Not surprisingly, it tries to get the march banned. Whether the march goes on depends on the decision of the MFA. The MFA decides that the march will take place. This marks another leap forward in the class struggle – the control of the CP over the working class is decisively weakened. There is now a clear way forward for the establishment of grass-roots links between the left of the MFA, the vanguard soldiers and the vanguard workers. The CP had tried to prevent this by keeping all contacts at a bureaucratic (high-up) level. A way is now open for vanguards 'without a political party' to work together. The 11 March allows this process to be accelerated and now (June) in Portugal there is a situation where grass root organisation is in the process of making irrelevant the elections and the main political parties.

Since June 74, general assemblies of workers have been electing Workers' Commissions in the majority of the factories. This movement is made easier because the PCP is opposing strikes because it does not want to frighten the military and the Portuguese bourgeoisie. Its alliance with Spínola will have the paradoxical effect of weakening the influence of the PCP in the factories.

Two hundred thousand unemployed — soon three hundred thousand. As the strikes continue, the Commissions are recognised by the government as ad hoc bodies. By now, in thirty-seven of the largest factories in Lisbon, commissions exist that are elected and recallable by the general assemblies. The tactic of the Intersindical towards the Commissions has changed: it now tries to get its representatives elected onto them. The movement of strikes has not lost momentum since June; the main issue is the purge of the fascists. Now there are two other important issues — the crisis of unemployment and rising prices. Portugal has two hundred thousand unemployed out of a population of nine millions; the economy is underdeveloped; prices are rising at the rate of thirty-five percent. The workers expect three hundred thousand unemployed in March. That is why they want an acceleration of the revolutionary process in a clearly anti-capitalist direction.

Inter-Factory Meetings

In September, after the strike of the TAP workers and the march on Lisbon of the Lisnave shipyard workers, the first attempt was made to bring together the workers commissions. Delegates from the Commissions start coming to an Inter-Factory meeting every Sunday. It is this body that sponsored the demo of 28 September after the failure of the attempted coup of the Spínolists. It calls for a march on 7 February 'against unemployment'.

The call for the march

The leaflet calling for support of the march made clear the intentions of the commissions: A demo clearly without party. Political organisations that want to support this initiative can do so by leaflets, but at the demo they must bring neither slogans nor their own banners. The organisation of the demo allows for the participation of isolated workers, of students, of soldiers and of sailors, as long as they accept the stewardship of the Workers' Commissions. The aims: against redundancies, against unemployment and overtime, for higher basic wages, for the right to work.

The Commissions claim that if two million workers worked an hour a day less, this would create two hundred and fifty thousand jobs.



OUR
POWER
IS IN
THE
STREETS

Lastly, the leaflet stressed the anti-capitalist nature of the demo. Unemployment is an inevitable consequence of capitalism. That is why workers want to destroy it and build a new world. And this was written on the banner that led the demo on 7 February. At the last minute, the Commissions decide on another slogan: 'NATO out, national independence!'.

The sleepless nights of Alvaro Cunhal

This initiative was a threat to the PCP and to the representativity of the Intersindical. It showed to the whole proletariat that a large autonomous working class force existed. More precisely, it would weaken the claim the PCP made to the MFA to be the only representative of the Portuguese working class.

On Thursday morning, the civil governor of Lisbon, a fellow traveller of the PCP, proclaims that all public demonstrations are banned in Lisbon from the 7 to 12 February. More violent is the condemnation of the trade unions in the South (part of the Intersindical). In their statement they say that: 'This demonstration is an attempt to confuse the democratic forces and to sabotage the construction of democracy'. All the political parties in the coalition government oppose the demo, and also the marxist-leninist MRPP.

Only the LUAR, the MES, the PRP and the marxist-leninist UDP support it.

The support of the MFA

By coincidence, the monthly delegate assembly of the MFA was taking place on the Thursday. It was expected that it would ban the demo. In the meantime, the Commissions were announcing that they would go ahead with the demo. On the Friday morning members of the Commissions went to see COPCON. At the end of this meeting it was announced that the MFA did not object to the demo. This is a vital event that modifies the relationship of forces in Portugal. The MFA had disagreed with the PCP and encouraged the expression of an autonomous workers' power that in the weeks to come would accelerate the revolutionary process in Portugal.

In the shadow of the 'Saratoga'

Around 1830 hours, the workers from the left bank of the Tagus disembark at Commerce Square. They are in their work clothes, with red helmets. They carry 'without party' banners with the names Lisnave, Setanave, Effacec, National Steel. The stewards have walkie-talkies and red arm-bands; they are all workers. They form a human chain around the demo.

In the background, three hundred yards from the shore, is the aircraft carrier 'Saratoga' of the US Navy. The demo is led by a jeep of the military police and a car of the DSP (the riot police). It is dark when it gets to the Rossio (the main square). Other delegations continue to join this compact body that only chants the approved slogans. All observers are struck by the strength the demo conveys — it exemplifies 'proletarian discipline'.

The demo, by now forty thousand strong, goes up Liberty Avenue (the main drag). Now the US embassy is four hundred yards away. Blocking the road, a hundred yards from the embassy are the COPCON troops under the command of Jaime Neves. Two companies of commandos stand in front of the troop carriers, armed with machine-guns. The MFA did not trust the police, which still contains many fascist elements. When the demo is only a hundred yards from the commandos, a quiet shout comes from the gathered workers — 'Forward'. Neves decides to let the demonstration through. He makes the troops under his command fall back and take up formation in front of the embassy. As the march passes the embassy it is flanked on either side by a cordon of commandos and one of parachutists. Shouts of 'NATO out, down with imperialism' are followed by a stony silence.

The soldiers are sons of the people

The demo makes its way to the Ministry of Labour, which is

guarded by another COPCON unit and two companies of the light artillery regiment (RALI). Those at the front of the march shout: 'Soldiers on our side'.

Then occurs a scene that helps you understand Portugal today — the soldiers, with portable machine-guns slung around them, turn to the Ministry of Labour, at the same time they raise their fists, to the great applause of the marchers. With clenched fists, workers and soldiers together shout: 'NATO out! National independence!' People were crying with joy.

This extraordinary scene, which reflects the alliance that exists in Portugal today and which shows the amazing politicisation of the army, is followed by speeches. Five workers speak, including one who is unemployed. During his speech, a worker from Setenave says: 'Of what use are most of the leaderships of the trade unions and the Intersindical? Only to call for demos that want to strengthen the political position of certain parties that are traitors to the working class.' As the demo is ending, a delegate from a Workers' Commission tells me: 'This is an irreversible victory for the Portuguese working class over reformist and revisionist organisations, over all those who think they have a right to represent it.' Another worker, member of a Commission, takes me by the arm: 'What we want, us workers, is to take power. Long live the working class!' It was a quarter to midnight.

STEEL WORKERS ORGANISE

On the other side of the Tagus, facing Lisbon, lies the red suburb. From Montijo to Caparica. The plants of the metal-processing and the electrical industry are there as well as power stations. From the 25 April Bridge you can see a giant blast furnace. The only one in Portugal, it is part of the National Steel plant which is owned by the Portuguese tycoon, Champasimau — a supporter of Spínola.

National Steel is a brand new steel plant with four thousand highly qualified workers. My guide is Manuel, a technical worker who works in a lab. We go through the gate and go towards where management's offices are. Everywhere there are signs of 25 April — there are posters on the wall and doors, especially of the parties. On the first floor, at the end of the corridor, there are two offices: one of the director general of the plant, the other of the workers' commission, with 'Workers' Commission' written on the door. Inside the Commission's office there is written on the wall, 'According to the position of the MFA, it is not possible that a minority continues to enjoy the privileges it 'fought for' under fascism'.



Inside the steel plant. The slogan says 'Out with the Fascists!'

Each section of the work force elects a delegate to the Commission, who is recallable by the general assembly of that sector. The commission has thirty-two delegates. Here, it is the basis of command. As far as the problems of National Steel are concerned, the Commission does not accept that any other political organ is above them.

Before the 25 April there were twenty-five unions that represented the workers on a trade by trade basis (horizontally). They were not allowed to meet nationally, nor between themselves in the factory. The union delegates were controlled by the ministers of the (fascist) corporations. Now 'the only vertical union is the Commission. It is the only organ that really represents the workers.'

A delegate tells me: 'The horizontal unions by trade divided the workers. Here it is the Commission that negotiates for the workers. It has taken the place of the unions. The delegates of the pre-25 April unions have been by-passed. By the way, almost all the delegates of the twenty-five old unions are in the Intersindical.² Eight months after 25 April, the situation is unclear in the factories. There are the remains of the fascist inheritance, there are the Commissions, and, also, the Intersindical. For example, in the old fascist unions you did not have to enrol — the only thing that was obligatory was to pay your dues! Everyone is still paying these dues but no-one is enrolled. The delegates of these unions represent nothing.

The authority of the Intersindical is not recognized in this, the third largest factory in Portugal. This adds to the 'confusion' of the situation. One of the eight delegates in the room adds that on 10 May the MFA recognised the commission as the ad hoc body that negotiated on behalf of the National Steel workers.

The May demands

The first list of demands put forward after the 25 April took up all the problems in the plant, 'including the sackings that had occurred before the 25 April'.

- 1 After 11 March, his empire was nationalised. Champasimau is now in Paris plotting.
- 2 This is worth thinking about. If we remember that it is the CP that has been pushing for the Intersindical, we can see what a bad tactic this has been. It has forced many workers into the arms of the Socialist Party; at least the SP is not pushing the Intersindical, which is full of people who compromised with the fascists.

Big Flame

PORTUGAL

SEPTEMBER 1975

SPECIAL

7p



All over Portugal slogans have been painted which say; 'CRIAR PODER POPULAR' (Create Popular Power). And this 'Popular Power' is not an abstract concept for the workers and peasants of Portugal, it is a very real process through which they come to control more and more aspects of their lives. Concretely it means;

- hundreds of factories occupied and under workers control, which means workers commissions having a say in how much is made and what is made.
- occupations of land by the peasants. Most of the occupied land is being cultivated on a co-operative basis. In Porto, the products from co-operatives are being sold direct to tenants at markets run by the tenants commissions. Many peasants from the co-operatives came on their tractors to take part in the Aug 20th demonstration - this was part of a political programme to re-unite the class.
- occupations of houses by tenants and squatters. In Porto and other big cities, tenants commissions are organized on a city-wide basis.

The commissions are beginning to repair and build houses and negotiate with the water and electricity boards. Some of the commissions run shops, some have newspapers.

- the beginnings of a free health service in hospitals under workers control and occupied clinics. In Lisbon, women workers who have taken over their laundry plan to make it a free service so that 'working-class women will be liberated from housework and the country will save foreign currency because individual families will not have to buy washing machines'.
- In Porto, women who used to be maids of the rich have occupied a mansion which they have turned into a co-operative for housework. They have declared that 'they will no longer do useless work in the houses of the bourgeois. They want to be at the service of other workers and not of parasites'. They have turned the mansion into a creche and a canteen.
- a newspaper (Republica) and a radio-station (Renascenta) that the workers have taken control of. They are setting up a People's Information Co-operative which will be the voice

and link of the tenants and workers committees. - in a few places representatives of the different organs of popular power come together in a Popular Assembly - to which the local soldiers committees send representatives. According to the COPCON document, when there are enough functioning local popular assemblies a national popular assembly will be set up to which all the local ones will send reps.

At a political level, popular power is represented by the revolutionary groups that have joined in a United Revolutionary Front- the PRP, LUAR, MES, LCI and the FSP. All these groups support the building of popular power, their militants are actively involved in the setting up and pushing forward of the workers commissions and tenants committees. And in many occupations, these groups have provided military assistance that has enabled those occupying to remain in control.

At a military level, popular power is represented by the soldiers and few officers who support the COPCON document, which is an outline for the building of popular power. The MFA is now split and the officers and soldiers inside the armed forces are being forced to choose sides. A process has started where left-wing soldiers are giving arms to the left wing groups who are arming the workers and peasants.

WILL THE REVOLUTIONARY FORCES IN PORTUGAL WIN?

Those who remember what happened in 1973 in Chile see many similarities with the situation in Portugal now. In Chile after the lorry-owners strike, there was the same building of popular power, the development of popular assemblies, the workers taking control of production and distribution. And it was this development of popular power that forced the ruling-class in Chile to make a military intervention that, sadly, was successful. In the same way, the Portuguese capitalists and ruling class cannot let popular power develop in

Portugal; they know that its triumph means the triumph of the revolution.

Revolutionaries must not be the servants of history. They must be able to see clearly the differences between historical situations. And there are two very important differences between Chile in 1973 and Portugal today;

1. the revolutionary movement has support inside the armed forces. It would be dangerous not to accept the fact that revolutionaries are in a minority inside the armed forces, but there are enough of them to make them unreliable as a force of repression for the capitalists. There is no regiment in Portugal that can be relied on to fire at workers and peasants in a confrontation. In fact the ruling-class and capitalists know that most regiments would not fire at the people. It is for this reason that they have trained an army in Spain, the ELP.

2. the ruling-class and capitalists are divided. There are those who believe that social democracy (Soares) should be given another go at dealing with the situation; others think that an invasion by Spínola and the ELP is the best bet. Some capitalists are against an invasion by the ELP, they say it would unite the revolutionary left and the moderates and push the revolutionary process forward. They do not want to run the risk of the revolutionary forces winning the civil war.

The political stalemate of the last few months reflects this division amongst the capitalists. But this stalemate at the level of government is only partially reflected at the grass-roots: there popular power is still growing.

No-one can know what will be the outcome of the class confrontation that is coming soon in Portugal. For sure, a revolutionary victory in Portugal would be of immense help to the revolutionary movements of Europe.

IT IS NOW THAT THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN PORTUGAL NEEDS OUR POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT. IF THEY ARE DEFEATED THINGS WILL BE MUCH HARDER - FOR THEM AND FOR US.

TOWARDS A PROLETARIAN HEALTH SERVICE

The fight of militant workers and peasants for socialism means many concrete things. For instance, it means the fight for better health care. Under fascism, the health needs of workers, peasants and their families were totally neglected. In Portugal to-day, the struggle of the proletariat to have its health needs met is taking many forms;

- hospital workers taking over their hospitals as at Santa Maria and Santa Cruz.
- revolutionary organizations occupying houses and turning them into people's clinics (as the LUAR did in Cova da Piedade, a Lisbon suburb)
- inhabitants of a village, assisted by revolutionary organizations, taking over the local mansion and turning it into a people's centre. This has happened at Aveiras de Cima and in other villages.

In the interview, Big Flame comrades talk with members of the Santa Cruz workers' commission. Santa Cruz opened as a luxury clinic in 1973. It has now been nationalized and is under workers' control. Santa Cruz is in the working-class suburb of Lisbon

called Pontinha -

'The organizing of the workers of Santa Cruz began immediately after the fall of fascism. Our first general assembly was on 11th May Relations with management (mostly doctors) got worse and in August, management said that the clinic was broke, that it had £110,000 of bad debts. The reply of the workers commission was that they were prepared to accept a 50% cut in wages if 50% of the patients admitted to Santa Cruz were free patients and the workers were represented on the management board. We had discovered that Spirito Santo, the banking family, had milked a lot of money out of the clinic. Now, there was no money left and the clinic would either have to close or become a state hospital. Management's counter proposal was that all salaries should be cut by 50% except those of the doctors, who were earning £1200 a month!!

Our response was to occupy the clinic. We had a press conference. We demanded the nationalisation of Santa Cruz, that it become a

hospital at the service of the people; this was on October 7th. We argued that the clinic was only bankrupt because management had been paying excessive interest charges to Spirito Santo and excessive wages to the doctors. The National Guard was called in by the management who wanted to take back and close the clinic.



Medical attention being given at the people's clinic - Cova da Piedade.

We had made another step forward in the struggle - we had taken on the problem of private property. On their side was the large majority of doctors, a few workers, and a reactionary minister of health (a Socialist Party member) - they threatened to take the hospital material away. In this situation, we called on the help of COPCON (at Pontinha); they said they would support our struggle, they mounted a 24 hour guard of the clinic. COPCON soldiers were invited to our general assemblies and they came with us to the series of meetings we had at the ministry. The government appointed a management committee that the workers commission decided to sack. From the popular assembly at Pontinha - which is a coming together of the workers, tenants and soldiers commissions of the area - we formed a committee which sent a report about Santa Cruz to the minister of health (who was by this time a member of the right-wing PPD). The report said that Santa Cruz was a very modern clinic which, together with nearby Santa Maria, must be immediately made available to the working-class. At this point, the minister of health resigned and so far we have not had an answer from the government.

Is the clinic functioning now?

No. All except ten of the doctors have left, many of them have gone abroad. Most of the nurses have stayed. There are left-wing doctors who would help us but they do not have much experience; the machinery here is very complex. Plastic surgery operations can be done here, there is also an intensive care unit. When it was a private clinic, it cost £25 a day to stay at Santa Cruz. We've had no patients for seven months.

What are the plans for Santa Cruz?

The state wants it to become a maternity clinic, but the people around here want it to be a general hospital.

Are the workers being paid wages now?

The workers that occupied and are still here have been paid by the state since the 10th of March. We went without wages for four months: some wages are less than when it was private. When it was private, wages were between £30 and £350 a month (including doctors), now they are between £80 and £160.

How big is Santa Cruz?

It has 120 beds - it can do 35 operations a day. We could easily cope with more beds; we plan to build some new wards on some spare land near the clinic. It will cost £1.5 mil to build the new wards. The present government has allocated money for 7 new hospitals, some of it will go to Santa Cruz.

What kind of an area are we in here?

This is a working-class area. We are near 10 shanty towns that have a total population of over 50,000. We are fighting to have them replaced by decent housing. The most common illnesses of the proletarians in the area are heart, lung and intestinal diseases which come from poor diets and malnutrition. At present, sick people who want free treatment have to go to the public hospitals of Lisbon or Cascais which are 12 miles away. These state hospitals are very old - they are in lousy condition. Santa Cruz is the only hospital with a helicopter landing space, which could be used for emergency cases from all over the country.

Where do the Santa Cruz workers live?

Most of us live in the area. A few live in Lisbon. Since there are no patients, we spend our time having meetings and political discussions - cleaning women and revolutionaries are the vanguard. The nurses are not really into it.

What is the situation with doctors in Portugal, what about the ones who left Santa Cruz?

In the rural areas, there is one doctor for every 6000 inhabitants - all the doctors want to be in the big cities. There are 300 people waiting for vital plastic surgery and yet there are only 12 beds in the whole country allocated to plastic surgery. There are 15,000 who were mutilated in the wars who are not receiving proper medical attention. The workers commission has asked for military doctors if private ones can't be got. Of the 76 doctors that used to work here, many have now gone to Brazil (to look after Spínola?). We have had many offers from comrade doctors from Chile, Argentina, Italy and Germany who want to work at Santa Cruz. The workers commission will take up their offers if the ministry does not soon solve the stalemate we are in.

What is the relationship of the Santa Cruz workers with the military at Pontinha?

We participate with them in the popular assembly. They have left a permanent guard at the clinic. Their general assembly (the ADU) fully supports our struggle. The major from Pontinha has said; 'We intervened on the side of the workers to uphold revolutionary order. The forces of reaction were sabotaging the health needs of the working-class people of the area. Something had to be done'.

'SOLDIERS UNITED WILL WIN'

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE MILITARY POLICE

This meeting took place on the 18th of August; it was part of a series of interviews/meetings organized by the Portugal-Italy Solidarity (A.A.P.I.). The meeting took place in the barracks of the Military Police in Belem, a suburb of Lisbon. All during the meeting, soldiers came to listen. Towards the end, the meeting was 'disturbed' by soldiers singing the Internationale and other revolutionary songs in the canteen. After the meeting, we joined the soldiers in the canteen for more talk and singing. Most of the questions are answered by officers, a few by soldiers. The Military Police is one of the most left-wing regiments of COPCON. Recently, they have been a vanguard in the refusal of the Portuguese soldiers to return to Angola; they are no longer prepared to be part of an Imperialist force. The traditional role of the Military Police has been to control and, if necessary, break up workers' demonstrations. Over the past year, they have had many opportunities to talk with the working-class - the result has been that they are no longer prepared to act as a force of repression at the service of capitalists.

What form did the struggle take in the armed forces before April 25th?

For the liberation movements (FRELIMO etc.), the war against the Portuguese army was an anti-imperialist one. For us in the army, it was also a war against hierarchical structures, before April 25th there was no democratic life in the armed forces.

Before 25th April, there was a certain amount of clandestine organization going on inside the armed forces: so the worms were there already. There were over 100,000 deserters - many of them armed, some were in liason with the MFA. The struggle went on before and after 25th April.

The forces of monopoly capitalism like CUF and Champalimaud supported the Spínola government that was formed after 25th April - this government made no great changes. It was the mass movement that began to change things, especially after the anti-'silent majority' mobilization of the 28th September. We are in the process of developing democratic structures in the armed forces, but they will only really exist when the structures of popular power exist and there are deep links between them. It is not the mission of the MFA to be the revolutionary vanguard - the MFA is the vanguard inside the armed forces. We must work towards a situation where the armed forces are under the control of the vanguards of the working-class. In any case there are many contradictions within the MFA.

What is your involvement in this building of popular power?

We are building concrete links with the working class. Take the problems that arise over the occupation of houses. The housing problem is dramatic - occupations are a mass movement. In each situation the question arises - is the occupation legal or illegal? We cannot decide this according to bourgeois law: what counts are the interests of the proletariat and its allies. Our role in these situations is not to act as a vanguard but to resolve the real contradictions.



In shanty-towns like Belaflor, the tenants' commissions work to improve the living conditions of the people.

These cases of house occupations can be very tricky. It must be the case that people have a right to their house which they don't lose if they go away for a few days. Of course, I am not talking about people who have more than one house - that is not acceptable. It is also the case that in the occupations movement there are many counter-revolutionaries who speculate by letting houses that have been occupied. Also, we must make sure that we do not alienate the small property owners whose support is necessary for the revolutionary process; many of them have been made hostile to the revolution. That is why we want popular structures that can decide these things. Us in the military do not want to have to decide as individuals in each confrontation about an occupation. We want there to be tenants commissions we can turn to that can make these decisions as representatives of the tenants of an area. There have been many opportunist occupations that have harmed the unity of the working-class.

PORTUGAL WILL NOT

(the next question is asked in the middle of loud singing and crashing noises coming from the canteen, a soldier answers it laughing.) Is there a problem of discipline in the armed forces in Portugal to-day?

Traditional military discipline must be replaced by revolutionary discipline, which may look like indiscipline. This problem must be seen in a wider context - in the fact that we are operating in a situation where the revolutionary vanguards of the class are not yet formed. This means that there is an overall lack of political consciousness - an inability to see who is the principal enemy. Up till now, the revolutionary forces have made many errors; especially during the rural agitation campaign which contained too much revolutionary rhetoric and not enough action. The agricultural policy has not been good and the peasantry has been a fertile ground for the reaction who is now on the offensive. These errors of the revolutionaries have been used by the right-wing, who were the first to criticize the Communist Party (PCP). Many of their criticisms were correct. At the present time there is great need for a revolutionary self-criticism. The 'document of the 9' is supported by many soldiers and officers in the country who will not accept PCP control over the revolutionary process. It is, in fact, a counter-revolutionary document.

The only way forward is to develop the unity of the working-class with the armed forces - to fight for national independence and the building of popular power. We realize that at this moment it is not possible for this to happen all over the world. We of the military police would like workers all over the world to take what is theirs - everything.

What did you mean by political errors?

The biggest error was to allow the elections to take place. They were just an occasion for the parties to put forward abstract programmes and they gave the right-wing parties a position from which they could use political blackmail. The elections were a bourgeois imposition on a proletarian process. THERE CAN BE NO NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE WITHOUT POPULAR POWER. Either the government is an expression of popular power or it obeys imperialism. In our fight against imperialism, our revolutionary process needs and demands the support of the European working-class to which it is a solid encouragement.

(a soldier speaks on discipline) What we must do is to show how discipline is needed to help the working-class. It is in this way that spontaneism is being overcome in the factories. Once orders have been decided on they must be carried out immediately - but they must be democratically decided on. There must be complete democracy in the election of officers and sergeants. It is essential to remember that the overall political class-struggle is



'Soldiers are on the side of the people.'

the background to the class-struggle in the armed forces. Whether or not there is rank and file control over the officers depends on the strength of the working-class outside. In some regiments they have tried to get rid of the left-wing officers and sergeants, this has been stopped by the mobilization of other regiments and the working-class.

WE CANNOT CREATE A REVOLUTIONARY ARMY IN A BOURGEOIS SOCIETY. The structures are bourgeois. A bourgeois army cannot become a revolutionary army; our regiments are not soviet. This process can only be brought about by popular power - and it will involve the arming of the class.

Can you explain what is happening in the North?

At the center of the problem of the North is a economic problem. To solve it will require an economic programme that must include price controls and health. Now the peasants are having to pay much more to the multi-nationals for fertilizer, animal feed etc, and they are not getting anymore for their products - the government is buying wine from them at 5p a litre which does not cover their costs. They are also at the mercy of private transport companies to get their goods to market. The army must take over this transport to make sure that what happened in Chile does not happen here. In Chile, the economy was crippled by a strike of reactionary lorry owners. Now regiments in agricultural areas like Santarem and Calda da Reinha are involved in transport. The COPCON document proposes;

- the building of popular forms of organization
- no economic dependence on the EEC and EFTA
- links with the non-aligned countries

We must put agriculture in first place and so make Portugal more self-sufficient agriculturally- this will help the payments balance.

BECOME ANOTHER CHILE

This will involve a decentralization of the economy. We cannot force co-operatives on the peasants of the North - this is a bad mistake. They will only be won over by economic results. As part of an agricultural policy, we need control of the prices of chemicals and fertilizers; control of output; cheap loans for peasants. There is also the problem of unemployment, which also includes the refugees from Angola who must be given aid.

We will have to nationalize all housing to put an end to land speculation. But we must remember that tenants commissions are inter-classist organizations and in some areas are controlled by the forces of reaction. Also we must socialize all medicine - all these different brand names in competition will have to go. To deal with the problems of health we need para-medical services. Action must be taken against acts of sabotage. The media must be put at the service of the people; they must not be instruments of manipulation.

At a political level, there must be a coming together of the executive power, the MFA and the revolutionary organizations. We must work towards the creation of a national popular assembly. But this national assembly cannot come into existence unless the grass-root organs of popular power are working - their creation is the priority now.



Demonstration for Popular Power and the COPCON document. August 20th.

It is now becoming clearer that the form the class-struggle is taking inside the armed forces is of a struggle between soldiers and officers, with sergeants having to decide what side they are on.

On the 10th of September, 2000 soldiers from regiments all over the country marched through the streets of Porto under the banner 'SOLDIERS UNITED WILL WIN'. The officers in

command of their regiments had forbidden them leave to attend the demo - they had come all the same. The demo was stewarded by members of the tenants commissions of Porto who made sure that no photos were taken of the soldiers. Throughout the demo the soldiers sang the Internationale; amongst the slogans were 'DOWN WITH FABIAO!', 'DEATH TO CHARAIS, the APPRENTICE PINOCHET!' (the names of two reactionary commanders). At the end of the demo, an anonymous soldier spoke; 'DEMOS LIKE THIS ONE MUST HAPPEN ALL OVER THE COUNTRY TO SHOW TO THOSE IN POWER AND THE BOURGEOISIE THE STRENGTH OF SOLDIERS. TO-NIGHT WE HAVE TAKEN THE FIRST STEP IN THE AUTONOMOUS ORGANIZATION OF WORKERS IN UNIFORM. SOLDIERS ARE SONS OF THE PEOPLE. SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH THE PEOPLE ORGANIZED IN FACTORIES AND COMMUNITIES, WE WILL OVERCOME THE MANOEUVRES OF THE REACTIONARY OFFICERS'.

As the demo ended, everyone shouted together; 'PORTUGAL WILL NOT BE THE CHILE OF EUROPE'

After the demo, Matos Gomes gave the interview that follows. Matos Gomes was until recently in charge of the training of new recruits at the commando regiment at Amadora. He has asked for a new post where there is not 'authoritarian discipline, passive obedience and alienating training'. Matos Gomes is a long standing member of the MFA.

'We must know how to abandon our illusions before it is too late. An army cannot be transformed from the inside. The military hierarchy wants to re-establish militarism, a strict respect for bourgeois authority. But the soldiers, the sergeants, the left-wing officers will fight for their rights. They have a clear working-class perspective - they are fighting for the development of general assemblies in the barracks, the development of popular education brigades and to confront those in power who want to stop the revolutionary process. This will only be possible if our struggle is linked to the struggle of the commissions of the workers, the communities and the villages. Only an alliance between the grass-root organs of popular power and the soldiers organized in their regiments will change the structure of the army.....The MFA does not exist now. Divided by the same contradictions as civil society in Portugal, the MFA has split. The anti-fascist phase is over - the MFA has done its mission. There now remain two options. Either to halt the process and to accept a social-democrat neo-capitalism or to continue going forward towards socialism - there is no other choice.....The left-wing forces inside the armed forces are in a minority. We are strongest in the most industrialized regions - Lisbon, Setubal, the Alentajo and to a lesser extent around Porto - but now the most important thing is our unity. The revolutionary left is much more united inside the armed forces than it is in civil society. Our ideas are straight-forward, we defend popular power and national independence.....Our opposition to a military hierarchy that has betrayed the 25th of April is not indiscipline. It is a real discipline freely chosen by those members of the armed forces who, faithful to the programme of the movement, have sided with the workers and the peasants.'

LISNAVE : REVOLUTIONARY STRONGHOLD

Built a few years ago with international capital, the LISNAVE ship-yards in Lisbon are the largest in Europe. 8000 workers work there and since April 25th, they have been one of the vanguards of the Portuguese revolutionary process. Everyone gathered in Commerce Square before the August 20th 'popular power' demo was waiting for the Lisnave workers to arrive and lead the demo off. As they arrived, there was a tremendous cheer. On the demo the Lisnave and Setanave workers march in disciplined ranks, with their red helmets on. They gave to everyone else on the demo a sense of proletarian order - a sense of the determination that will be needed in the hard struggle with the forces of reaction.

The grass-roots organization of the Lisnave workers is called the Committee for the Defence of the Workers (the CDT). In this interview, Big Flame talks to a member of the CDT. The interview took place in a large office in the ship-yards that belongs to the CDT.

Who owns Lisnave? - who runs it?

The state has a 44% interest in Lisnave, the rest is foreign capital. A new management team has been appointed by the government. We have refused to participate in it, the role of the CDT is to defend the workers not to run the yard. But we are implementing workers control over the quality and quantity of production - in Portugal to-day, sabotage is often a tool of the forces of reaction.

We want to make the CDT more representative of the work-force, to enlarge it to 300 members. We already have general assemblies that everyone can attend.

Have wages and conditions changed since the state took (effective) control of the yards a few months ago?

The programme of the CDT is to reduce wage differentials; we are asking the government to implement a national minimum wage of £100 a month and a maximum of £210. Piece-rates

and bonuses were abolished after April 25th. We work a 42 hour week which is guaranteed.

What are the links between the CDT and other organs of popular power?

There are meetings which bring together representatives from all factories and offices in the Lisbon-Setubal area. We participate in the popular assembly of Almada, which is the suburb of Lisbon we are in. Also there are meetings between the CDTs of all the ship-yards to try and work towards a more rational sharing out of work; right now some yards have too much work, others like us and Setanave have too little. Soldiers and sailors come to the popular assembly; it has demanded of the state that it set up a building programme to build people's houses in Almada - we want the local unemployed to work on this project.

What does the building of popular power involve?

In this district, there are popular vigilance patrols that keep an armed watch over the district at night. In fact, Almada is a 'red' district and there is not much sign of the fascists. At a national level, it means for instance re-uniting the working-class. We were involved in the preparation meetings for the August 20th demo where slogans like 'an end to the misery of the peasants' were decided on. Lisnave workers go every week-end to the rural co-operatives in the South to help. Last week-end, I was with 300 other workers at Fintas Noves picking tomatoes. The CDT is investigating the possibility of converting some of our machinery to make agricultural implements - to break the international boycott. These are some of the concrete ways popular power is being built.

We read in the papers that Brazil had decided to cancel a contract with Lisnave because the yard had been nationalized.

That cancellation was good for us - it was a contract on which we were going to make a loss. Still the work situation at Lisnave is critical. No tankers are being sent to us for repair; we have the capacity to repair 22 a month, we are getting 6-8 in. We have links with Erikson, a Swedish yard. They tried to swindle us out of some work we had agreed to do for them, the Swedish workers helped us



Lisnave workers on anti-fascist demonstration.

in our fight to get compensation which we won. We are getting orders from the socialist countries - Bulgaria, Poland and the USSR; Japan is cancelling orders.

Because of the work situation in the yards, there are no vacancies - only a few for skilled workers. When vacancies come up we make sure that management gives priority to ex-Lisnave workers and the unemployed.

Is there a creche for the kids of the workers?

There is but it is small. It is being expanded to take 150 kids, but it will only be for the kids of women workers. The other women workers and myself take it in turn to work at the creche. Many of the Lisnave workers support the nearby Cova da Piedade clinic, but the CDT cannot support it officially.

What is the relationship between the CDT and the CRT and the political groups?

The CRT (mainly PRP militants) is small - we can work very well with them. The CRT's criticism of our programme was that it did not include the military defense by the workers of the ship-yards - we have now added that into our programme. The UDP are impossible to work

with, they do not seem interested in concrete problems. As yet there is no programme to train the workers to use arms - but the revolutionaries have the problem in mind.

Is the CDT doing anything about leisure etc.?

We have a very good programme of educational and political discussions. Since there is not much work, the workers want to take advantage of the extra free time. They also do social work at the creche, in the gardens.

On the ferry to Lisbon, we asked the comrade a last question. 'How is it that a people oppressed by 48 years of fascism have so fast got into the fight for total control over every aspect of their lives?'

Under fascism we were not allowed to say anything, not allowed to meet in public. What we did was to go home and secretly read the banned books - Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg, Che. These books were passed from one person to another. All of us developed a very high political consciousness, now we have an opportunity to change things.

(this interview took place on the 26th August - the day the United Revolutionary Front began.)

SUPPORT THE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN WITH THE PORTUGUESE WORKING CLASS

affiliate to the Portuguese Workers Co-ord Com.
by writing to 18 Fleet Rd.
LONDON N.W.3

read the newsletter 'OUR COMMON STRUGGLE'

- NO ECONOMIC BOYCOTT
- BIG BUSINESS, NATO, CIA - HANDS OFF PORTUGAL
- PORTUGAL WILL NOT BECOME ANOTHER CHILE



PUBLIC WEEK OF ACTION

These meetings are part of a week of action (Sep 20-28th) of the European revolutionary left in support of the revolution in Portugal. The week of action is an initiative of Lotta Continua and is supported by groups in France, Germany and England. At a meeting held on Sep 7th in Lisbon, representatives from the Popular Assembly at Pontinha and the CDT of Lisnave gave their support to the week of action. During the week, there will be mass demonstrations in support of the Portuguese revolutionary movement in most European states.

The meetings will also celebrate the tenth birthday of the Chilean revolutionary organization, the M.I.R.

At all these meetings, there will be
Speakers from Portugal (except Manchester)
A speaker from the PWCC
Slides of the revolution in Portugal

MEETINGS

LONDON

The Rugby Tavern,
Rugby St., off Lambs Conduit St.
Holborn, W.C.1
SATURDAY 20th Sep 7.30 pm

BIRMINGHAM

Wellington Pub
Bristol St.
WEDNESDAY 24th Sep 7.30 pm

MANCHESTER

Star and Garter
Fairfield St., near Pic Station
FRIDAY 26th Sep 8.00 pm
(plus revolutionary songs from Chile)

P. AND P. by BIG FLAME PUBLICATIONS

The conditions of work? Of the four thousand workers, a hundred and fifty have silicosis or other industrial disease. Their demand is for a forty hour week instead of the forty-four they are now doing. In the end they accept management's offer of forty-two. The list of demands also includes a demand that the spread of salaries be reduced. Before the 25 April the highest wage was four hundred times the lowest! The workers demand that it be only seventeen times the lowest. The workers succeed in getting the minimum wage raised from £80 a month to £100. They also demand a bonus-sharing scheme – before April these were illegal. Management agrees to an equal cash bonus for all grades, including staff.

The Purging Process

Above all, there is the question of the purges. In most factories this question was and remains the key one. It is all the more important as it has an anti-authoritarian content and that the 'getting healthy' process is taking time.

The cellulose factory of Velha de Rodao has been occupied by the workers: they insist that three of their directors be removed. The importance of this struggle of the workers – which has been going on for eight months – becomes apparent if one remembers the current scale of economic sabotage. The right is fighting back by sabotaging, by disorganising production. In the South they are letting the cattle starve to death and the crops rot. Elsewhere, machines are not looked after and rust away.

The problem of the purges is directly linked to the struggle against economic sabotage. It is also a question of power.

On 24 June, the workers of National Steel march to Lisbon to demand the removal of a manager with a fascist past. The same day, another manager is locked in. The workers make an ultimatum about their list of demands. For the first time, Champasimaú shows up, before the just-sent telegrams. They negotiated and settled with the Minister of Work as referee.

Leaflets signed individually

By now the people talking to me want to discuss the December events. Someone goes to the cupboard and fishes out a pile of leaflets. One thing strikes me: all these leaflets are numbered, dated and also signed. The leaflets of the Commission are signed by its members. If there were only three present when a leaflet was decided on then it is signed with their three names. So no-one can hide behind the cover of 'the Workers Commission'. The original cause of the December movement were Christmas bonuses. The technical staff got between £150 and £1000; for a skilled worker it was only £30. Only one member of the technical staff had 'abdicated' his bonus – he was in the PCP.

Three days in December

A strike with occupation? It was not possible, since stopping production in the only steel mill in Portugal would have been a disaster. It would have also been sabotage. So the workers do not go on strike. They work as they think fit; they refuse to take any orders and advice from the technical

staff. They go into the offices to make sure that the technical staff don't lock themselves in. On the contrary, they are forced to circulate in the factory. This action begins on 17 December.

On the third day there remained the problem of the special steel mill. The computer operators had taken the computers' memory-banks. We got hold of a sympathetic computer programmer who worked somewhere else. He showed us how to get the computer going and how to programme it. We did all the calculations ourselves. At seven in the evening we was programmed and we could start production in the mill again. It had taken us seven hours, whereas it normally takes programmers ten hours.

Negotiations were difficult with the Minister of Labour – Carvalhas, the PCP guy – who is behind the fight for the trade union law.⁴ He came here and he told us: 'If I didn't know you lot, I could swear that some of you are being paid in dollars.'⁵

On telly

The technical staff were interviewed on the telly. They said that they were forfeiting their bonus because 'the economy was in danger' and because the workers 'were vandals'. The workers wanted to be interviewed by telly as well – television management refused. Finally, telly management agreed on the condition that the workers did not say that they had been refused access to the programme the first time. The telly bosses had been forced to give in because we were speaking a lot on Radio-Club and Radio-Renaissance. Technical staff also gave in – 'the total of their bonuses were given to a social centre controlled by the workers.' In the following days there was much bad feeling towards the technical staff – 'But it would have been wrong to prevent them from working. They had given up. They were no longer our masters. In fact they no longer talked in the same condescending manner.'

Unity – OK, but at the base

The Commission meets once a week with management. And once a week there is a general assembly of all the workers.

The workers do not know yet all the details of the law on the trade unions. But they are all for having only one trade union (unicity): 'We agree that there should be only one trade union, but it must be controlled by the workers. Unity, yes, but at the base'. In any case, if there are new elections for trade union delegates, the members of the Workers' Commission will be elected.

- 3 The fascists are parasites that have to be purged for health reasons.
- 4 Repressive trade union legislation passed by the Provisional Government in August. Even tighter than the British government's Industrial Relations Act. It has not been enforced often because of the strength of the revolutionary struggle. But it remains as a potential weapon against the working class.
- 5 Old Stalinist trick – to try and discredit someone you are struggling against by calling him/her a Nazi or Imperialist agent.

PEOPLE'S BANKS

The takeover by the state of the banks and insurance companies is part of the victory over the forces of reaction of the 11 March. It is part of the mobilisation of the people. On the telly there is an ad that asks for 'Unity, vigilance, work'. In recent months in Portugal there have been many examples of proletarian vigilance: on the walls in Lisbon people have been sticking posters giving the names of known fascists and the number-plates of their cars; bank workers have been checking the accounts of customers they suspect of being right-wing and were quick to inform COPCON of any illegal transfer of money they made; insurance company workers immediately occupied their offices after the 11 March, demanding of the state that they be nationalised. Since the 11 March, apartment buildings have been occupied; in a Lisbon suburb a bourgeois mansion has

been turned into a people's clinic; in the small town of Villa Real de Santo Antonio the anti-fascist action group has taken over the running of local government; many factories have been occupied and put under workers' control. The workers of the Pinto de Magalhães Bank have sent a message of support to the Council of the Revolution in which they demanded that every day be marked by a revolutionary act. The Lisbon truck drivers, realising that 'through their control of transport the bosses have a thousand ways of sabotaging the national economy', have demanded that the transport industry be nationalised.

The actions of the bank and insurance workers were a key part of this mobilisation of the people. It was their actions that forced the government to nationalise these sectors, which play a crucial part in the Portuguese economy. In

* An example of the class learning from Chile, where the strike of the truck owners in October 72 crippled the economy and split the Popular Unity government (see *Chile 5/8*).

Portugal, there was not the split between industrial and banking capital there is in most capitalist economies – in Portugal it was the same thirty families that controlled both sectors.

'The bank serves the people', 'people + MFA = nationalisation' – these are the banners that are spread out in front of the banks in Lisbon after the decision of the Council of the Revolution to nationalise the banks, the loan companies and all their branches abroad.

The twenty-two members of the Council have wasted no time in going ahead with the process of nationalisation. This decision was expected after the arrest of many Portuguese bankers, who are thought to be involved in the failed putsch of the 11 March. Workers are still occupying their offices, which will re-open at nine this morning (14 March). In the airports and frontier posts, pilots, stewardesses and passengers are methodically searched – no-one is missed. In this way, the soldiers show their determination to stop capital leaving the country: it is estimated that already four hundred thousand pounds has gone.



'Insurance Company – Nationalised for the good of the people'

Hit them where their money is

The speed with which the decision to takeover the banks was taken is explained by the general feeling in Lisbon. A bank worker tells me: 'We must act quickly and to begin with, hit them where their money is'. The uncertainty about who started the putsch – which civilians and which military were involved – give way to a feeling that this failed putsch was only a trial run.† There is a feeling that the right's offensive is not over and that the 'enemies of the people are still within our walls'.

Banks are not usually buildings of the people. Still, on Friday morning (14 March), they look as if they are part of a festival. They have become 'Banco do Povo' (Banks of the People). On a branch of the Portuguese Bank of the Atlantic, a giant inscription in red has been painted: 'Nosso', that is, 'Ours'. The palaces of money are in the hands of the people. And the immense plate-glass windows that are the pride of banks the world over have become the wall-newspapers of the Portuguese revolution – a revolution that is now coming to grips with the problems of the transition to a socialist society.

The speed with which the decision to nationalise was taken has political reasons. Although it is still uncertain which military regiments supported the spinolist offensive, there is no doubt that financial capital played a leading role in the acts of subversion that have gone on since 28 September. By this act of nationalisation, the Council of the Revolution wants to strangle this 'liberal' headquarters of subversion. Friday night, at a general assembly of Lisbon bank workers, union members began to draw up a list of charges against the most important directors of the banks.

Fascist links

During the fascist regime, the directorships of the banks were

very close with the fascist state machinery. A worker in the (ex) Portuguese Bank of the Atlantic, an anti-fascist militant for many years, told me that one of the managers of this bank was State Secretary to the Economy in the first government of Caetano. After doing a stretch in government, he went back to his position of director at the bank. And, the worker talking to me adds, 'he was one of the more enlightened'. After the 25 April, he is one of the founders of the CDS (Democratic and Social Centre) and is 'involved in the attempted coups of the 28 September and the 11 March'. The CDS will certainly be outlawed in the next few days, together with the PDC (Christian-Democrat Party) of Sanches Osorio. The company report of this bank that has just been nationalised is impressive. It states that the bank owned in 1972: 'Sixteen percent of all the deposits in commercial Portuguese banks; five insurance companies and many research and development companies; petrol refineries; cement factories; cellulose plants, breweries, glass factories, synthetic resin plants. It participated in real estate, tourism, film-making, cinemas, car-parks. It had subsidiaries in Angola and Mozambique, where it owned textile factories and a hydroelectric power-station.'

By nationalising the private banks, the Council of the Revolution killed two birds with one stone. It has attacked the political/economic organisation of capital and has nationalised over fifty percent of Portuguese industry. On Saturday (15 March), twenty-seven insurance companies became state property. The same will happen to the other key sections of the economy.

The generosity of Spirito Santo

It has been proved that the Spirito Santo Bank, most of whose business is in Angola and Mozambique, was financing the right-wing parties, the CDS and the PDC. The workers of the bank, in their search, have found that an account had been opened with ten escudos (20p) in it. A few days later it was credited with one million escudos (£20,000). There were many cheques that were not covered. In the Oporto branch, it was discovered that £15,000 had been paid out to right-wing militants to pay for the trucks and buses that took the 'silent majority' to Lisbon on the night of the 27–28 September. Also, the management of the bank had perfected a system to take capital out of Portugal. What led to the arrest of the majority of the directors of the bank was that the bank was borrowing abroad on credit provided by the (state-owned) Bank of Portugal, the central bank. To help small and medium firms that were in difficulty, the Bank of Portugal encouraged the merchant banks to provide the firms with loans that it backed. The investigation showed that this money made available by the Bank of Portugal was 'laundered' through accounts of the different Spirito Santo companies and by the mechanisms of international finance ended up abroad.

To avoid the embargo?

Though this nationalisation was drastic, it did not touch the foreign interests in three banks: Franco-Portuguese Credit, the Bank of London and South Africa (Bolsa) and the Bank of Brazil. The same goes for the insurance companies, where foreign capital has a majority interest (which is not the case for the banks). This political distinction is meant to avoid international 'backlash' from the nationalisation – which would be a total economic blockade, as with Cuba.

Who holds power?

In Lisbon, it is thought that very soon electricity, the petrochemical industry, the steel industry and the mines will be nationalised. Also profit margins on certain products will be once again controlled, and the national minimum wage could well be raised shortly.

So, the Portuguese state has become the largest boss in Portugal. It now seems that the question of power is the key question. In three days since the 11 March forty-five factories have been occupied and the majority of them are under workers' control.

In Chile, the successful coup of September 73 was preceded by the 'Tancazo' of June 73. The right used the Tancazo to keep their arm in, to see who was and who wasn't loyal to the government.

* The same goes for many members of Conservative governments in this country: Du Cann, Thorneycroft, Maudling, etc. – the members of Labour governments tend to go into directorships of industrial companies (George Brown, Lever, etc.).

FIFTEEN THOUSAND AT BEJA

On 13 April, fifteen thousand poor peasants, supported by the local union, the PCP and the MES, marched through the streets of Beja, in the Alentejo, demanding expropriation without compensation of the big landlords; the land to be given to committees of agricultural workers; financial and technical aid to be given by the government. One of the workers on the demo told me: 'In the Alentejo we still live in the middle ages. Four members of the Ortiz family, including the famous bullfighter, own a hundred and ten thousand acres in the province. What we need in Portugal is a government like in Cuba.' The officer, Brisses, civil governor of Beja, warns the peasants about the 'dubious' groups of the extreme left. He appeals to the 'common sense of the peasantry'. Lieutenant Coelho, of the Third Infantry Regiment, praised the March: he says that, 'It is clear proof of the maturity of the agricultural workers'. Both officers claimed in their speeches to be carrying out the programme of the MFA!

RED VOTES

We are in Beja in the Alentejo (literally, 'beyond the Tagus'). On the walls, at the political meetings, in the streets, everywhere, there is evidence of a permanent mobilisation and politicisation. A great tradition of class struggle is fully alive: that of the miners of Alustrel (thirty miles to the south-west), and that of face-to-face fighting against the masters of the land and the fascist repression. Throughout the Salazar period the PCP organised in this area. Here, on 25 April the votes will be red.

The big landowners are on the defensive and have had to make concessions. After the fall of Caetano they tried to resist the pressure of the people by refusing to cultivate land that had been left fallow and deliberately abandoning crops. They began a sabotage of production — getting wrong planting times; planning unemployment and, in some places, poisoning the cattle's drinking water. Today there are many rumours about the clandestine cells of the right wing ELP (Portuguese Army of Liberation), who are said to be getting arms from Spain.



The Posters — the PCP's — indicate it's the Alentejo, traditional centre of militancy and PCP support.

The workers are vigilant: the movements of the large owners are checked and noted down; estates are searched. Each move of the forces of reaction is met with an increase in the popular mobilisation: after 11 March there was not a road that was not blocked by armed militias of agricultural workers; not one 'doubtful' barracks that was not surrounded by agricultural workers demanding the 'unity of the people and the MFA'.

NO MORE UNEMPLOYMENT

The first priority for the workers of the Alentejo is the expropriation of the large owners and the immediate collectivisation of the land. In the region, there has been disastrous levels of unemployment, made worse by the growth of capital-intensive agriculture. To make sure there is work for everybody, the spontaneous occupation and use of agricultural land began very soon — 25 April. There were ten thousand unemployed in the region, now there are almost none. The large owners were forced to employ a number of 'those without work', depending on the size of their estate. One of them who refused was found dead. The workers have won control of the allocation of work. The control of production — of what is grown — has begun.

At Caixa, the peasants occupied the lands of the Duke of Lafoes and turned them into a co-operative. Since no technical aid was forthcoming from the Agricultural Institute, they took some agricultural machines from a nearby penal colony. Then they uprooted the useless eucalyptus and planted cereals and vegetables. They now run the place. In many places the peasants have not waited for land reform before they acted.

Since 11 March here as throughout the country, there are occupations of houses that the owners refused to let. At Vila Vicosa the militants of LUAR helped set up a 'commission of the badly housed', that collectively examines individual cases before deciding on which squatted house to allocate to which family. At Castro Verde, a 'cultural and sports centre' has been set up in a squatted mansion. At Alcaccer, women in the MDM have, against the instructions of their organisation, occupied a house to set up a kids' garden. Not a village, not a town, has escaped this wave of occupations. The government has quickly passed a law that legalised these occupation but forbids new ones.* But this law has little chance of being applied; no more so than the very unpopular anti-strike law of August which has remained 'on the shelf'. In all this the extreme left is very active; the people's desire for housing does the rest.

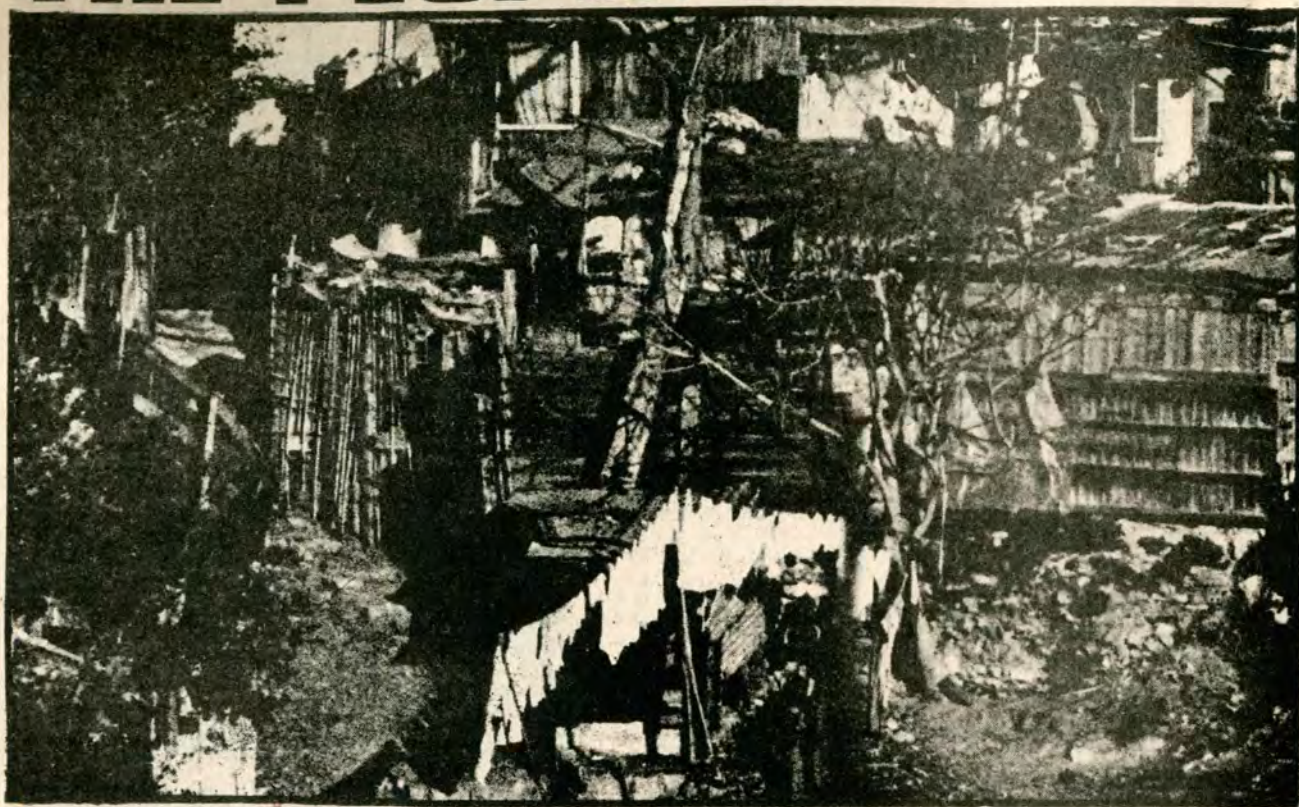
PROLETARIAN POWER

There are other amazing, isolated things happening. In Albernoa, ten miles from Beja, MES militants were instrumental in the setting up of a 'village committee'. This committee fills the vacuum of power that has existed at a local level since power was taken away from the reactionary GNR.

In the countryside, the class struggle is going on between the agricultural workers and the big landlords. What land reform there is will be the result of that struggle. There is also a struggle going on between the rank and file agricultural workers and the PCP dominated union, which has failed to take up the question of land reform. A MES militant says: 'What is at stake is whether agricultural capitalism will be weakened. Whether the mechanism of financing and distribution will be re-organised under workers' control.' In the villages and on the occupied land, 'proletarian power' is becoming a mass movement. The implementation of land reform will unleash new social contradictions and new struggles for control.

* The government tried this in Lisbon last May. It did not work people refused to accept that only occupations before 10 May were okay.

THE PEOPLE'S



— A Lisbon shanty town: 30,000 live like this.

WELFARE STATE

Within days of the MFA coup on 25 April 1974, the first factory occupations were under way. But in the last few months the occupation movement has spread to the communities and the countryside. Where houses and land lie unused, the Portuguese working class is taking them over for its own needs.

The Provisional Government has announced a development programme for housing and for other social facilities, but the problems are too pressing to wait for official solutions. Workers, parents, housewives, students, are all taking the law into their own hands, with the support of the revolutionary organisations. Like the officers of the MFA, the main parties — the PS and PCP, are often forced to accept the occupations as a fact of life, especially when their own militants are involved.

Housing and health

The Portuguese government estimates that in the four main cities alone there's an immediate need for half a million dwellings. Half a century of fascism has left thirty thousand working class people just in Lisbon living in wooden and tin huts in the shanty towns that encircle the capital. Yet there are something like ten thousand empty flats in the city — kept that way by landlords who have 'disappeared' to avoid being forced to let them under new laws.

The chances of remedying the housing shortage through a crash building programme are slight. With inflation in the region of thirty-five percent, there's no money for one, and

the building industry — which has always catered for luxury housing and tourism — is in the doldrums, leaving thousands of construction workers jobless. So the empty houses are taken over — above all when they belong to people known to be involved in the two attempted right-wing coups.

Most of the occupations are for housing, but since there is no welfare state in Portugal, many buildings are being put to use as clinics, nurseries, schools, community centres, offices for the political organisations, and leisure centres for workers and their families.

In the countryside though, where social conditions are often as primitive as in Africa or Latin America, the need for social facilities and housing is even more acute. We include here a report written for the French revolutionary daily paper, *Libération*, about the occupation of a middle class children's school as a nursery in the village of Almerim.

A new people's nursery in the countryside

Almerim, a few miles south of the River Tagus, March 1975:

It's 5 pm. Fifteen or so LUAR militants from Almerim and Santarem; a handful of workers, and some women pile out of a convoy of cars in front of a massive three-storey building, the Institute of the Count of Sobral, the property of a man called Francisco Lobo de Vascon Conon.

The LUAR militants are armed with revolvers, but this is something that's only hinted at. One of them scales the gate and opens a door which the commando squad closes behind it. The LUARs put on their armbands, the women follow suit. Theirs is in the colours of the Portuguese Communist Party. A banner is slung between two windows – 'People's Nursery'. A rapid inventory is made of the house and the phones are checked.

One group leaves the building and starts giving out leaflets while another team gets down to decorating the wall outside: 'Popular Power' and 'Death to Capitalism'. It's now 6 pm – the time when the farm workers start coming back from the fields by truck and tractor. The cross-roads are soon congested. Some of the workers are reading the leaflet out loud. One of the LUAR militants is there to read it as well. So, like an echo, you can pick out the phrases: 'Down with the Reactionaries', 'Death to Capitalism', 'The People are with the MFA'.

The women range between fourteen and sixty. For all of them their working lives are just a series of memories of suffering, humiliation, physical breakdown, illiteracy, and the boss, above all. Here, traditionally, the only festival is the struggle. The Alentejo has a reputation as the bastion of the anti-fascist resistance. At the cost of many deaths and long years of prison.

A policeman of the GNR, standing impassively, is doing what he can to control the traffic. Three hundred yards up the road the trucks and tractors stop in the square outside the People's Centre, a kind of community centre. Close to five hundred people wait to enter the meeting hall. Its walls are covered in pictures of Catarina Eufemia, killed by the GNR in 1954 when they broke up a farm workers' meeting, and posters – the PCP's alternating with those of the other parties. But it's pretty clear that more than anything else, this town is Communist.

On the stage a 45-year-old farm worker, the president of their trade union in Almerim, explains why they occupied the Institute: 'These are decisive times for the future of the working class. And necessarily, people are waking up to the real problems; the ones everybody shares, especially the lack of facilities of any kind for the kids.' There are frequent interruptions as the men and women workers rise to their feet, their fists wielded like weapons, to underline his points – 'Down with Capitalism', 'Down with the Reactionaries', 'Power to the People'...

The five hundred gather outside and move off towards the Institute. The PCP women and the LUAR militants are standing on a balcony. They speak to the crowd, and then there's the scramble to get inside. Everybody tugging at each other's coats to get past thorough the door. They all badly want to find out what's inside the mysterious house in the town centre. A worker and his brother, both probably in their fifties, as if taken by a fit, hurl their caps to the ground shouting, 'Those robbers – down with the reactionaries!'

This enormous house of over thirty rooms, with its school desks and children's dormitory, its chapel, could cope with all the children in Almerim. Except that the owner, a big local landlord who lives in maybe Lisbon, or Castelo Branco in the North, has always refused.

As the union president puts it: 'He's nothing but an exploiter, hiding behind his religion'. Some of the workers here work on his lands. 'It would be terrible to give up a place like this. It wasn't built just to be closed up', says a worker. A woman is crying. One of the LUAR militants tells me that she lost one of her children very young and that if this place had been open to the people then, she wouldn't have lost it. It wasn't unusual, just a few years ago, for parents to take their children out to the fields with them until they found someone to look after them.

I talk to a worker of about thirty, working in a wine store. Three years ago he came home after eight years in France. Now he's with the MDP-CDE which is considered close to the PCP.



Villagers decide to occupy.

He's one of a group of fifteen parents, including the trade union president, who set up a committee to look into the problem of the kids. Five times they wrote to the landowner asking him to make the house available to the whole town. That was before 11 March. But now, 'it's different'.

LUAR – an occupation force

About twenty miles away, on the other side of the Tagus, the revolutionary committee in Aveiras da Cima, helped again by LUAR, took over a kind of country villa to use as clinic and maternity hospital for the people. The Almerim parents' committee were persuaded by Aveiras da Cima; convinced by what they saw, they decided to carry out an occupation themselves too, also calling in the LUAR – 'Because', they say, 'Almerim is still really reactionary and we were a bit worried about things getting out of hand'. The MDP man explains to me that the committee called on all the parties for support. They refused. At the same time, he points out, the committee includes 'people from the PCP, the PS, the MDP. They decided to occupy, and then we asked LUAR for help.' The LUAR was a group involved in armed struggle against the dictatorship.

With the occupation over, a management committee of parents is set up, while the LUAR group gets ready to pull out. They had only come as midwives or, as one of their leaders puts it, 'an occupation force'.

Now it's 8 pm. All the farm workers are there when the civil governor of Santarem and the regional military commanders turn up. There's an immediate meeting in one of the rooms of the Institute between the parents, LUAR, and the 'authorities'.

The two senior officers have said nothing. But they are obviously pleased with what's happening, with their black hand-made riding crops and white gloves. They're cavalry. After 11 March they'd taken over from the officers supporting Spínola.

One of them, lieutenant-colonel Alves Ribeiro, who took over command of the military academy in Santarem on the morning of 11 March, told me: 'We came here with the governor to find out if there was anything that could be done about the owner of this place. The people had to do this because there's nowhere for the kids. It might have been done differently, but the owner was adamant. There was no other way of solving the problem... It's been done with good intentions, even if it is somewhat unorthodox. But it's inevitable after forty-eight years of fascism... that's what the struggle against capitalism is like.'

Rural Portugal

Altogether just under one-third of the Portuguese work force gets its living from the land. But while this is one of the highest proportions in Europe, the agricultural economy is the most backward. The North's system of land tenure ensures that few farmers there can afford to mechanise, and besides the size of the holdings are too small to make it worthwhile. In the latifundia region, vast expanses of land are left uncultivated by absentee landlords – like the Duke

of Cadaval who lives in Paris & last visited his estates forty-two years ago. So in the South the net result is unemployment or seasonal underemployment for thousands of farm workers. For the country as a whole, an unnecessarily large bill for imported foodstuffs.

Encouraged by the factory occupations in the cities, the response to these conditions has been a wave of land occupations in the Alentejo, beginning early this year. A dozen ploughmen moved onto the Duke of Cadaval's estate and began ploughing it. The farmers' leaders, Jorge Relva and Antonio Grenho, were explaining to a government official that they represented a newly formed group called the League of Small Farmers, set up to run the new land they were liberating.

They had been planning the move for three months. Nineteen of them went to Lisbon to tell the Minister of Labour what they intended to do. They were received civilly but told that they should wait for a new agrarian law. The minister was unable to say when that would be, so the farmers gave him an ultimatum: if he could not produce the law by Saturday, 1 February, they would ride their tractors onto the estate and start ploughing. 'We also informed the local armed forces and the Duke's foreman', they said. 'But

we heard nothing, so here we are.

'That's fine', said the government official. He had heard that the Duke intended to abide by the agrarian law whenever it came out. 'But in the meantime', he added, 'we must be careful. We don't want to destroy one capitalist system just to build another.' The ploughman should not think that, because they had made the first move onto the land, they were the only ones entitled to cultivate it. 'But we don't think like that', said Jorge. 'We don't want to keep the land, neither do we want to squat on it. We are quite willing to pay rent.'

A few days later, on 9 February, thirty thousand farm workers met in nearby Evora to discuss their plans for agrarian reform. Their first demand was for the confiscation of all land belonging to landlords implicated in the attempted coup on 28 September 1974. But since then there has been a second attempt, on 11 March, which brought in its train a renewed movement for the purging of all the fascists in every walk of life, not least in the countryside. And the unity that came out of the swift and vigorous working class reply to the coup has strengthened the occupation wave. The farm workers are proposing their own solutions to the agrarian problem, and they're less willing to pay rent.

WOMEN RISE UP

On January 13th this year the MLM held a demonstration. Their leaflets said:

'Women's situation, exploited and oppressed in every country in the world, gives us little to celebrate. But in spite of the discriminatory attitude implicit in International Women's Year, we are going to take advantage of it to denounce publicly the different ways women are oppressed in Portugal.

'And we're starting with a bonfire. We're going to burn objects which symbolise our oppression.'

After newspapers had heralded the demonstration as a 'striptease', thousands of men turned up to observe, mock, and physically attack it. Women were beaten, stripped, insulted; the children they had with them were attacked. As the MLM pointed out in a letter to the government:

'Until yesterday, every demonstration has been peaceful, orderly and respected. We had no warning that all this would be changed by the simple fact that the demonstrators happened to be twenty women.'

BEFORE 25 APRIL

'I've worked at "Coats and Clarks" for nineteen years. All this time, I've suffered and seen a lot of my companions suffer. Some of them couldn't take any more, they left. Others had to put up with everything because they had a lot of difficulties at home and unsympathetic husbands. All us who've worked here for some time know which are the rotten ones in the factory. But everyone keeps quiet. Unfortunately, it's always been the same. And I know why: it's because they're afraid. They're afraid of being attacked; they're afraid of the men. And then there are the others, who cover up because they're in with the bosses, which means higher rates of pay. The ones who earn more keep quiet too. And it's a shame, because it should be all for one, and one for all!

'I've got three kids and plenty of problems - otherwise I would have left long ago. This is what I'm suggesting: let's form a women's group which will stick together and defend each other, and if necessary give a good lesson to those pigs, because that's what they need.'

This letter to a left-wing paper from a woman worker in the North of Portugal brings up a whole range of the problems confronting women in Portugal: oppression at work and at home, fear of husbands and of bosses, the burdens of child care; barriers to getting together to fight. The fight that is beginning is on every front: against material exploitation in an underdeveloped but rapidly industrialising economy; against legal and political repression in a country only recently freed from fifty years of fascism, and against the





Demonstrating for immediate end to colonial wars: 'Bring our sons home!'

ideological power of the Catholic and fascist tradition, through which women have been seen as submissive to God, man and family.

LEGAL OPPRESSION

A woman from the Womens' Liberation Movement (MLM) pointed out how the fascist conception of the family is built into Portuguese law: 'The family group, according to the law, is a fascist cell: with a boss, the man, who has the right to make all the decisions. The woman is left with the sphere of childcare; just about the right to bring them into the world and bring them up.' In law, a man has the right to repudiate his wife's employment contract. Some women never get as far as a work contract. I met one who did two mornings a week sewing for an architect's family because her husband wouldn't let her work in a factory.

A journalist, Maria Antonia Palla, tells a story which illustrates the different treatment of men and women in the law: 'A little while ago, I went to a poor area: a woman of thirty had been arrested. She had tried to poison her husband. She has two children. I talked to her neighbours and relatives. This woman was married very young, her parents made her because they thought she'd slept with her future husband. I saw her mother, who told me very calmly: "We thought it was with him, but in fact she'd slept with her husband's brother". After the wedding, the young woman moved into a tenement with the whole family: her mother, her father, her husband, his brother and wife. The husband was jealous, because he found out, obviously, that he wasn't the first. In the tenement, she couldn't stand her husband any longer. She tried to divide the flat in two, but the family wouldn't let her, and told her she ought to obey her husband in everything, including making love even if she didn't want to. So she went off into Lisbon and wandered around all day; sometimes she begged. Her husband was furious and ordered her to stay in the house to look after the kids. A house with no water and no electricity. She tried to kill him.

'The Court decided she was a little feeble mentally, but quite responsible for her actions. She got a thirteen year

sentence. The husband's doing fine. They talk about it in their street: some people say the husband was a good father, because he used to bring fruit for the kids as well as his wages. Others argue that a woman's not an animal, that she had the right to refuse to sleep with him, and anyway, her husband beat her. In Portugal, a man is untouchable. He has the right to kill his wife if he finds her "in adultery", or his daughter, if he finds her sleeping with someone. If he is sometimes brought to court it's for a minor offence, like using an unregistered weapon! Six months!'

WOMEN AT WORK — AGRICULTURE

This legal oppression, as always, is built on a system of severe exploitation of women in their working lives, in their work as rural labourers, factory workers and housewives. In the South of Portugal a few powerful landlords own large estates which are worked by landless labourers. The majority of these are women since many of the men are immigrant workers in France, Germany and Britain. Women's wages average fifty escudos a day (less than £1), and are fifty per cent lower than men's. Employment is seasonal, mainly during the harvest. The older women are taken daily in lorries from their villages to the fields, while the young girls live in primitive dormitories attached to the landowners' haciendas. All rural workers are employed on a day to day basis, with no pensions, disability or unemployment benefits, and no help with medical expenses. Earlier this year the agricultural workers' union in the Alentejo district issued an appeal for help for the women of Mertola, a small village where they were dying of hunger. Out of ten thousand unemployed in Alentejo, eight thousand are women. The women of the Alentejo have a long tradition of struggle against these conditions — strikes, arrest, imprisonment. The symbol of their fight is Catarina Enfemia, assassinated by the National Guard during a strike for an eight-hour day.

WOMEN AT WORK — INDUSTRY

Over the last ten years large numbers of women have been drawn into the industrial workforce. They have replaced the

men away fighting the colonial wars or working as immigrants abroad, and they have done so as cheap labour. In 1972 the average daily pay of women ranged from half to two-thirds of that of men. Now, they are supposed to get equal pay, but this will not be easy in a situation of the return of the colonial army, unemployment, economic instability — and male attitudes to working women. A leaflet put out by the MLM highlights these problems:

'Working women, watch out!

"equal pay for equal work . . ."

That's what the law says, but it doesn't always happen in practice. We women must demand the enforcement of this law, and fight the mentality which considers our work inferior to men's (and which unfortunately many of us share).

'Take the examples of the Via Longa Brewery and the Pao sugar factory: In the brewery, once they'd won the minimum rate (the same for men and women), the male workers felt insulted. They immediately demanded an increase to maintain their differential from the women. When it's not the bosses who are exploiting us, it's our own "comrades" who are demanding this exploitation. The same in the sugar factory, where the workers refused equal pay. The MLM calls on all women workers to fight this sexist discrimination.'

On the other hand, one of the most important demands of the strike wave after 25 April was for equal pay: something which reflected the large proportion of women workers especially in the multinational companies. The strike at Timex, a light engineering factory near Lisbon, is a case in point. There, one of the first moves was to set up a workers' strike committee, with a majority of women. The women pushed for equal pay as one of the main demands and received the backing of the men.

WOMEN AT WORK — IN THE HOME

Housing conditions in Portugal are as bad as any in Europe. Only twenty percent of dwellings have a kitchen, lavatory and bathroom. A further twenty percent are 'deficient' and sixty percent 'hopeless'. Only forty percent of houses have running water; a further twenty-seven percent have access to pumps nearby, and thirty-three percent have none at all. All over Portugal you see women carrying cans of water on their heads, up steps and hills, or doing their washing in streams. 82.7% of dwellings have no sewers and 61% have no refuse collection service. In these primitive conditions, coupled with the almost complete absence of nurseries, it is women who suffer most.

Women in the MLM are trying to reach women working in the home:

'Last year we had a meeting for "housewives". More than four hundred women from all backgrounds came. They all complained of their lack of education — some couldn't read and write (fifty-eight percent of Portuguese women are illiterate), many never got beyond primary school. It was the first time that they could talk about themselves.'

A 'housewife's group' now meets every Monday at the MLM women's centre (a house they have occupied in Lisbon). 'But often it's difficult for women to get out. They're kept in the house, their husbands stop them coming to evening meetings, in the afternoon they're busy with the kids and in the morning they have to do the housework and cook lunch.'

In the women's centre, to raise funds, they sell aprons embroidered with 'Que se Lixe a Lida da Casa' — Fuck Housework.'

BIRTH — AND DEATH

The French journalist Blandine Jeanson describes the situation created by poverty and lack of maternity and medical services:

'In Villa-Franca de Xira, on the edge of the river Tagus not far from Lisbon, the fishermen often have nothing but their boat; they live in the boat. Lots of women work there as

well, going out to fish in all kinds of weather to provide for themselves and their children. One of them has already lost five children. They died of cold, damp, hunger. Their mother had neither the time nor the means to take them to the "Casa de Poro" which provides a meagre medical service. Her son of fifteen is always ill and very behind at school; she doesn't have time to take him to school. While she is fishing, they stay behind in a shack, left to themselves. Twice she has given birth in her boat.'

Portugal has the highest infant mortality rate in Europe: fifty-eight children in a thousand die at birth. Thirteen per cent of babies are born with some sort of handicap. 'There are no maternity hospitals in Portugal', said a woman from the MDM. 'The four private maternity homes in Lisbon are obviously reserved for the rich. You pay eleven thousand escudos (£220) for a confinement. My mother paid twenty escudos for my birth, in a communal ward. That's how working class women have their kids.' As many as fifty-eight per cent of births have no medical assistance at all.

NURSERY CAMPAIGNS

This appalling lack of provision carries through into pre-school services. In 1910 the Republic instituted official pre-school education, but this was removed under Salazar. In 1973 there was a total of a hundred and sixty-five nurseries in Portugal, of which only sixteen were state run. The others were private, and too expensive for working class women. The MDM is organising a nursery campaign. Working with local councils and community groups, they find empty houses, train childminders, and set up creches. 'We don't squat, we get the approval of the council', a woman from the MDM told me. 'We think you should take the legal way. Eventually we want to see a national system of creches linked to the national health service. But we can't ask too much from the government at present, because of the country's economic problems.' Other groups of women are taking direct unofficial action. A newspaper article describes how a group of 'working mothers' from a government department have occupied an old tobacco factory and intend to set up a nursery.

CONTRACEPTION AND ABORTION — A 'PRIVATE' PROBLEM?

Writing in the newspaper *Liberdade*, a woman from the MLM said: 'Countrywomen, working women, lower middle-class women — most of them have been to hospital in a critical state at least once. Most abort themselves, with a knitting needle, duck feathers, pointed sticks. A woman of forty-four told us: "I work in the fields. I've done thirty abortions all alone." A midwife said to us: "Sometimes I do as many as ten, thirteen abortions a day". She was speechless when we worked out that made an average of two hundred abortions a month. The Portuguese population doesn't know, or pretends not to know, about these things. In fact abortion is a huge problem for the less privileged women in our society. But the political parties won't approach the subject directly.'

Most men prevent their wives using contraceptives because, they say, it could make them impotent. Women have to take the pill in secret. We women must have the right to decide what we do with our own bodies.'

There are now about forty family planning clinics in Portugal, financed by the IPPF. And some of the political parties are beginning to talk of legalising abortion, but on very restricted grounds. The measure of entrenched attitudes against abortion and contraception can be seen from the very guarded attitude of the MDM, a left women's rights organisation. An MDM worker told me, 'We're not in the contraception and abortion movement. We're not against it, but we don't think it's a priority. We have to be careful after all, Portugal will need more people to industrialise successfully. We feel contraception is a very private affair. It's up to the couple themselves to decide about it.' As long as deaths and illness from illegal abortions, with men physically preventing their wives using contraceptives, are regarded even on the left as a 'private affair', women will face enormous obstacles.

They thought they were too weak...

Laundry Take-over

At the end of a bus route, a station: Encarnacao. The double-decker (Leyland) bus stops in the middle of a working class suburb, a high-rise council estate. Council estates are a precious commodity in Lisbon — seventy thousand proletarians still live in shantytowns that reach into the city centre. Many others live in shacks. On the walls of the estate, one slogan, 'Liberty'. In one of the towers, there is a small laundry called Martirol. Twenty-five women workers work there; some of them are only thirteen or fourteen years old. 'It's because I didn't want to stay on at school that I got a job here', explains a young girl to us. She spends her whole day breathing in the steam from the machines.

In a crowded basement, crowded together are the washing machines, the dryers, the ironing machines, the tables to fold the laundry on and piles of laundry. The workers work the whole day standing up. The heat is unbearable.

A three day old poster

Victoria, who is 21, talks to us in the workshop. She is a member of the Workers' Commission which was formed last Tuesday. It has five members — three women and two men — two of the five delivery drivers. Since three days ago the poster 'MFA—People, People—MFA' is on the door of the workshop.

Since 6 February (three days ago), the small laundry is under workers' control. Victoria and others take part in the conversation to listen, discuss, comment, etc. The others continue to work. They are shouting to each other, folding laundry, carting baskets around. They do not yet know whether at the end of the month they will be able to pay themselves the national minimum wage. In any event, the feel of the place has changed since now they are their own bosses. But they are not prepared to pay themselves 75p a day as was the case for Fatima. Under the old boss, the most senior workers earned £1.50 a day. From time to time the question of a wage rise came up and, in regal style, the boss would give his workers a few more pence. There was no union. The boss had explained to them that dues were a waste of money. Which, under fascism and the corporate unions, was true.

They experienced 25 April in the streets, like all Portuguese. But liberty did not reach them in the laundry; they thought they were too weak to demand the minimum wage.

From seven o'clock to midnight

It all started two weeks ago when one of them went to the offices of the textile union, which was quite near there. She told them about the conditions of work; she had said: 'There are no fixed times of work. The boss makes us come at seven in the morning, and often we do overtime till midnight. The work must be finished. We work an average of seventy hours a week.'

The union called for the Inspector of Work Conditions — in theory it is illegal to employ people who are under sixteen. The Inspector insists that the boss pays the national minimum wage, which is what the workers are asking for. On 5 February the Inspectorate organises a meeting between the boss and the Workers' Commission delegated by the workers. The boss immediately sacks the Commission and decides, the next day, to lock-out all the workers and close the laundry. He takes with him the bills of the jobs being done and the two hundred pounds in the till.

The next day all the workers have a meeting. They have to decide whether they will pay equal wages to women and men — a very rare occurrence in Portugal. In all industrial or agricultural jobs, the men get one third more than the women. What the women say is, 'The main thing is to first pay the heads of family, men or women, and then the kids. In any event, the men because they are members of the drivers' union get higher wages. Later on, we will talk about equal wages for all. If everybody does the same work, we will all give ourselves equal wages — how much our rises are will depend on how much money there is to go round.'

The Workers' Commission

The younger women are in short skirts or trousers, the elder in black dresses — two generations, two worlds. The younger ones, half the work-force, are sleepin on the spot, under the tables. They are guarding the workshop. They are not sure what they want: to ask the government to nationalise the business or a new boss. They do not have



Canteen workers in an engineering factory.

much political experience. In any case, they know they need a new legal owner because if the old boss came back he would try to kick everyone out. His last threat had been: 'If you want the minimum wage, I will sack the adults and only keep the youngsters, whom I have to pay less'.

Why a Workers' Commission? Because all factories that go on strike have one. Some of the workers are union members, but it's not the same thing. The Commission is different, it is 'in permanent meeting'. Every problem is immediately discussed.

Occupations

Many small work places run by small, 'fascist' bosses, have gone on strike. In the great majority of cases, the government supports the workers' demand for the national minimum wage of £55 a month*. On the demo of the 7 February, the Workers' Commissions called it a 'wage of misery'.

As part of its three-year economic plan, the government will loan money to medium and small companies, which are the economic backbone of Portugal. They were 'competitive' under fascism only because of the miserable wages they paid.*

It is women — very young women — who tend to be the majority working in these places. As opposed to the proletariat of the large work places of the left bank of the Tagus, they have not the experience of fifty years of struggle against Salazar's fascism. But, this summer, they have fought spontaneous struggles full of creative militancy to take over their work places, abandoned by bosses linked to the old government. The women workers of Sogantal in Montego went to the beaches to sell the tracksuits they had made. In many cases, all this activity is not well received by their families. But freedom can but shake the old ways of looking at things.

* Like the UK tea companies in Ceylon, and other UK firms in South Africa.

* At the end of May the national minimum wage was raised from £55 to £75 a month.

ARMED MOVEMENT



THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT AND POWER

Today, the role of the Armed Forces Movement is crucial to the revolutionary process in Portugal. By this we mean two things. First, that without the support of the MFA, that process might well come to an end: for the time being the MFA is the guarantor of the Revolution. Second, that the process itself is inside the MFA.

For us the key to understanding the MFA is to look at the relationship between the mass vanguards of the working class and the left of the MFA. As the mass vanguards organise their power, they are forcing members of the other classes in Portugal to make a choice: to side with the revolutionary process or with the international capitalist class. The result is that the middle ground – based on the alliance of classes with conflicting interests – becomes harder to hold. Over the last year, it is clear that many members of the MFA have chosen to side with the revolutionary movement.

MFA'S ORIGINS

The MFA was created by the African liberation struggles, so that the armed forces were the instrument of the liberation movements when they overthrew Caetano.

The junior officers who began the MFA in 1973 were motivated by their experience of Portuguese imperialism – that is, its effects on their own lives, on those of their people, and on those of the Africans. The original impetus for the Movement's formation was distinctly unpromising. Regular combat officers were concerned about the effects on their promotion opportunities of a new regulation giving university entrants immediate parity of rank. Although the Movement's concerns rapidly widened from this starting point to a consideration of colonial policy generally, the university conscript officers, the milicianos, were never really a close

part of the MFA. (It is only recently that the MFA expanded to include non-officers.)

More than anyone else, it was the junior officers in the field who knew how badly the war was going and how improbable a military victory was in Angola, Mozambique or Guinea-Bissau. But, in many cases, these officers had no political commitment to the war. In the first place, relations between troops and white settlers were tense, the soldiers deeply resenting the style of life of the colonials, and the latter bitter about the army's failure to protect them from 'terrorist' attack. (Settlers attacked troops, killing one, after a FRELIMO victory in early 1974.)

Moreover, as one MFA member, Matos Gomes, points out: 'There is a great similarity between the people of the North East of Portugal and Africa. We have found here a colonial situation.' (Interviewed at the end of a popular education campaign by the MFA in the North East in February 1975.) Not all the MFA officers had to wait for the education campaign to discover the condition of the people, especially in the countryside, which was the inevitable consequence in part of the enormous military drain on national resources. Many of them came from these small towns and villages and knew at first hand that Portugal had both the highest adult illiteracy rate and the highest infant mortality rate in Europe. All this helps to explain the main points of the MFA programme – immediate decolonisation and government action to improve living standards.

The Portuguese army was the second imperialist army to refuse the role allocated to it: the first was the Russian in 1917. For this to happen there were important influences other than the sheer experience of class exploitation in Africa and Portugal.

The main influences were the African liberation movements themselves and the struggles in Portugal itself. Propaganda work was taken very seriously by the liberation movements, and prisoners of war were not only well treated but intro-

duced to the achievements of the people in the liberated areas. The struggle in Portugal which probably had the most impact on the MFA was in the universities. Many *milicianos*, drafted in to help fill the severe shortage of junior officers, brought with them into the armed forces both an experience of struggle and a political consciousness. Finally, and not surprisingly in a conscript army fighting a losing battle under appalling conditions (four years service; low pay), there was a closer identification with the struggles of the working class than with the aims of the state.

25 APRIL AND AFTER

'The MFA is the fourth movement of national liberation' – Agostinho Neto, leader of the MPLA of Angola.

25 April was a combination of a military coup by Spínola and other senior generals at odds with the regime's imperialist policies, and an armed uprising by the middle ranks of the armed forces, with the MFA as an organising vanguard of two or three hundred officers. This is a combination which has shown itself to be highly unstable. The coup brought to power a coalition of forces which has gradually broken down, in the aftermath of two attempted coups.

But the majority of the MFA were undefined in their politics, even if most would have called themselves socialist. When Admiral Coutinho declares: 'The principal aspect of our socialism will be social justice, work for everyone, security in old age . . . in sort, everything that goes by the name of socialism . . . In fact, what we want is a socialism without bureaucracy!' it is obvious that he has taken a position anywhere on the spectrum between social democracy and revolutionary socialism. In fact, it is under the pressure of the working class struggle which the MFA unleashed on 25 April that what socialism means in Portugal is being defined. And whilst the MFA may defend the gains of that struggle, it is not the primary element in pursuing it.

THE MFA AND THE WORKING CLASS

It is in its relationship with the working class that the MFA's politics have been defined more clearly and the contradictions within the Movement exposed. The turning point in that relationship was undoubtedly 28 September. Spínola's involvement in the attempted coup showed that there was a



From the beginning, sailors have been the most militant section of the armed forces. 3000 came to their first congress.

limit to the support that the MFA could expect for its 'socialism' from some sections of the ruling class. Unless, of course, it was prepared to repress the strikes and occupations as relentlessly as fascism had.

On 28 September the MFA found that it had taken up a position close to the working class out of the necessity of defending the gains made since 25 April. From the moment that the workers and their political organisations begin to barricade the main roads into Lisbon, the MFA finds itself responding more and more to events, rather than shaping them themselves. The even closer co-operation between the most left wing elements in the MFA and the workers' organisation on 11 March has helped to bring about one of the most decisive developments in Portugal. The penetration of the class struggle inside the armed forces.

There is now an important movement within the armed forces for the radical transformation of military life: the abolition of privilege and distinctions between officers and men; equal rights to decision making in the MFA by all ranks; political education as part of basic training; the abolition of automatic commissions for university students, and the move towards a popular army, trained to defend the gains of the revolution. Otelo de Carvalho, in the interview we print, describes many of these developments. What underlies them is the increasing involvement of the soldiers and NCOs – the 'uniformed sons of the people' – in the politics of the armed forces, and their realisation that a battle has to be fought to ensure that the revolutionary process is not halted. More simply, the struggle for the abolition of separate messing in the air force, for example, owes a lot to the precedents set by the workers' movement in its fight against privilege.

So, when we say that the class struggle is inside the armed forces, we mean both that the social composition of the lower ranks places them alongside the workers' movement in its struggle, and also that as an institution, the armed forces and its members must themselves choose between the revolution and capitalism, and that this choice is being made through struggle.

Inside the MFA itself, the vanguard of the services, the pressure of the struggle can be felt most of all among the officers. Left wingers are having to decide where their closest loyalties lie: with the NCOs and men of their unit who want to press ahead with the formation of democratic assemblies of the whole unit, or with 'moderate' officers who aren't happy with the pace of change. What is beginning to emerge is a distinct non-party position, probably best represented by Carvalho.

THE MFA AND THE PARTIES

It is clear that had they stood, MFA candidates would have swept the board on 25 April. It is the sense that in many ways the MFA is the party of the working class, and rather more representative of the needs of the class than either the PS or the PPD, which together gained the most votes, which has helped to bring out a distinct non-party position in the MFA. This corresponds to a strong belief in some vanguard sections of the working class itself that what is paramount now is not the building of the parties but the creation of strong, independent instruments of workers' power – perhaps workers' revolutionary councils.

It has to be remembered that, apart from the PCP, none of the existing political parties counted for much in the working class during the fascist period. They arrived on the night train from Paris, usually coming complete with a programme constructed in cosy exile but having little to do with conditions in Portugal today. The PCP is still one of Europe's most stalinist communist parties. Its rigidity means that it nearly always acts as a brake on the development of working class power. The marxist-leninists, consumed by hatred of the USSR and 'social fascism', as they call the CPs, are incapable of seeing who the class enemy really is. Their policy of backing the PS against the PCP is disastrous. That leaves small revolutionary organisations like PRP and LUAR, which are growing but still don't have a mass presence in the working class.

SERVE THE PEOPLE

AGITATION AND PROPAGANDA IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

In the recent months, a large part of the MFA's work has been their 'going to the peasants'. What this 'rural agitprop' has consisted in has been groups of MFA officers and sergeants touring the countryside, explaining what happened on the 25 April, talking about the elections, asking the villagers what their needs were, providing rural villages with the services of a doctor, arranging with students to go out to teach the agricultural workers how to read, etc. This rural agitprop campaign has been a central part of the MFA's fight against internal imperialism, in their fight against malnutrition and illiteracy which are both key weapons of fascism. It has also been central in their fight against the Church who, working hand in glove with the capitalist landowners, were more than glad to keep the rural people in darkness.

(The interviews are taken from *Liberation* and *Politique-Hebdo*, two great left-wing French magazines. They are from February and April 75)

Mundao, a village near Viseu in North Portugal

We are at an agitprop meeting of the MFA. Two hundred people — men, women and children — have come to hear 'those who have made the revolution in Lisbon'. Two non-commissioned officers of the MFA have already spoken, now it is the turn of the local captain of the GNR (the National Republican Guard). The audience is particularly interested in what the GNR captain has to say since the GNR was the organ chosen to maintain Salazar's fascist order in the countryside. He speaks: 'As you well know, we of the GNR were often used against the people. Often we were sent in to smash strikes. We had very strict orders which we had to carry out, even if we did not want to. We must no longer be afraid of one another, we must work together. Tell your children that the agents of authority are no longer there to arrest people but to help them. To live with the people is the new line of the GNR.'* There is applause all round. The turnaround of their face-to-face enemy, the GNR, matters a lot to the inhabitants of the village.

A passionate dialogue begins between the inhabitants of Mundao and the military come to 'agitprop' them. 'Mister Doctor, what will visits to a doctor cost?' The military doctor answers: 'I know that in the past a visit to the doctor's has cost you four to five pounds, a week's wages. Those times are gone. A doctor will no longer be someone privileged with a vast salary. Like everyone else, he will work eight hours a day and will not be allowed to only practice in the cities.' The MFA then go on to encourage the villages to vote in the forthcoming elections as a sign of their support of 25 April. But they add: 'A socialist society as we want it will not be built by the Socialist Party. For forty-eight years they have terrified you with tales of communist atrocities. Today the PCP is a member of the coalition government. You have a duty to listen to what they have to say and to ask their candidates questions.' Everyone laughs as a woman says, 'Ah, well, I certainly won't vote for the Communists'.

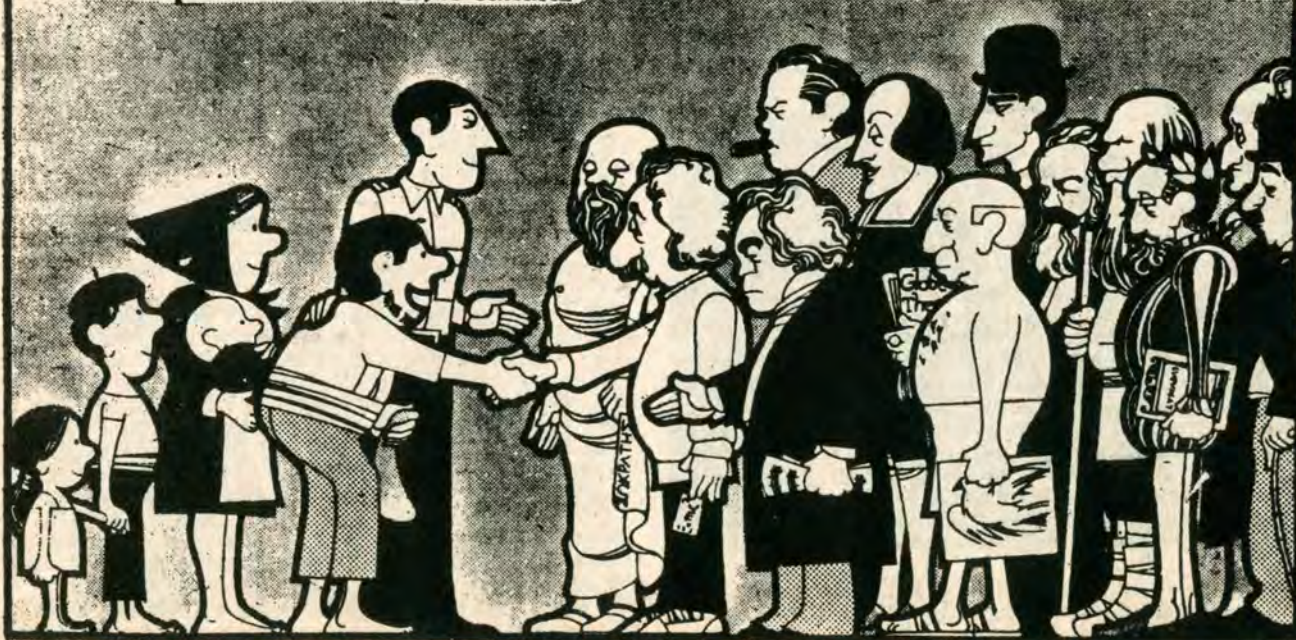
Every day for two weeks, jeeps painted with MFA go to villages in the area. These new missions are far different from the colonial missions in Guinea, Angola and Mozambique. In fact they are inspired by the practice of FRELIMO and the PAIGC — they are part of the reconversion of the Portuguese army. An officer says: 'As we go round the country, we find poverty, isolation, loneliness, that we never imagined. These conditions alone demanded a revolution'. Now the talent of the forces will concentrate on electrification and irrigation.

In the present conditions, it is only the MFA that can counterbalance the power of the landlords and the Church, who are saying that 'the red carnation is a symbol of communism', 'they will take your land', etc. In most cases, the villagers are glad of the attention their problems are getting from the MFA because they have plenty of problems. Some of the villages have no phone or road to link them to the outside. Sometimes the MFA teams cannot find the villages! But nice speeches are not all the villagers want: they want an improvement in their everyday life. Without that all talk of 'revolution' is irrelevant. The land reform plans include the setting up of agricultural co-operatives a lot will depend on how these are carried out.

* We have not quoted this because we think the captain is sincere. What is important is that he feels obliged to say it (in front of the MFA). In the long run, what matters is how the class balance of forces has changed in the village after the MFA have gone. No doubt their visit will give the peasants courage to push for their demands.

M.F.A. Campanha de dinamização cultural

Rural agitprop campaign



With the MFA agitprop campaign in Villa Velha

In the village of Foz almost all the four hundred inhabitants are children or old women. The few men who remain work at the olive mill where the oil is made. In this village life has remained the same for a century: there is no water, no electricity, no canals. A road is the main concern of the villagers. It would make it easier to get the baskets of olives to the mill; it would make access to the cemetery easier. The members of the agitprop campaign investigate; they take notes. They check out the different places a bridge could go. A report will go to the military construction team that builds these roads and bridges.

Water, irrigation, medicine, electricity, fill up the 'complaint notebooks' of the MFA. For these poor and illiterate peasants, democracy and freedom begin in these 'complaint notebooks'. A woman shows us a hole in the roof which is just above her bed. Fear is written on her face. It no longer seems that we are in Europe but rather in Bolivia or Peru, in the midst of underdevelopment. Everyone is well-disposed and interested in the MFA visit, but fear is still there. The army doctor tells me: 'The people here still live with fear. We are here so that they are no longer afraid.'

The regional headquarters for the rural agitprop campaign is in Villa Velha. The MFA have taken over a mansion which is now full of posters, telephones, typewriters, area plans, loudspeakers; the military is clearly in command. The few civilians there belong to the three theatre groups that the MFA has asked to play in the countryside. Film makers and painters also participate in the campaign.

The North-East is an area 'where communists are sometimes stoned to death'. It is the *Tran Os Montes*, the country of the devil and wolves. Of it a MFA major says: 'There are great similarities between the people in the North-East and the African peoples. We have discovered here a colonial situation. Landlords who dominate the economy and rule over peoples' minds. Most of the peasants do not know of the political transformations that have been going on in Lisbon. That does not mean that these people are not conscious of what they want. It is the most 'backward' people that are often the most aware of problems. Our actions have undermined the dominance of the landlords. They have also raised the consciousness of the military. **The very structure of the armed forces must go forward and cease to be a dead weight on things. It must become a structure that is of use to the exploited classes.**



MFA, People: People, MFA

If the military has a contribution to make to the process, the contribution of civilians must not be underestimated. Military men are trained to make war. When they take part in the rural agitation and propaganda, they are hit by the concrete problems that the people face: roads, health, etc. ... Without the influence of civilians on them, the forces might have been inclined towards militarism. This we have avoided. Another officer tells me: 'In the towns, it is the revolution of the political parties. In the countryside it is the revolution of the armed forces.' This direct contact, the reciprocal learning is called 'a cultural revolution'.

POPULAR MILITIA

OTELO DE CARVALHO INTERVIEWED

The interview was published in the daily newspaper of the Italian revolutionary organisation, *Lotta Continua*, on 12 May 1975.

Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho is one of the original 25 April men. Then, a young major and one of the founders of the clandestine MFA (Armed Forces Movement), he commanded the operation which one year ago brought down the Caetano regime. One of Spínola's most hostile opponents, against pressure from the Junta, he set up COPCON (Continental Operational Command) in July 1974. He became second in command of this key military unit. And in that position he played a key role in the events of 28 September and 11 March. Today as a brigadier general, he can be considered one of the left-wing members of the Supreme Revolutionary Council. The mixture of pleasantness and impulsiveness that comes over when he talks has helped to make him one of the MFA's most popular figures.

LC: To begin with, what changes have been taking place inside the armed forces in the last few months?

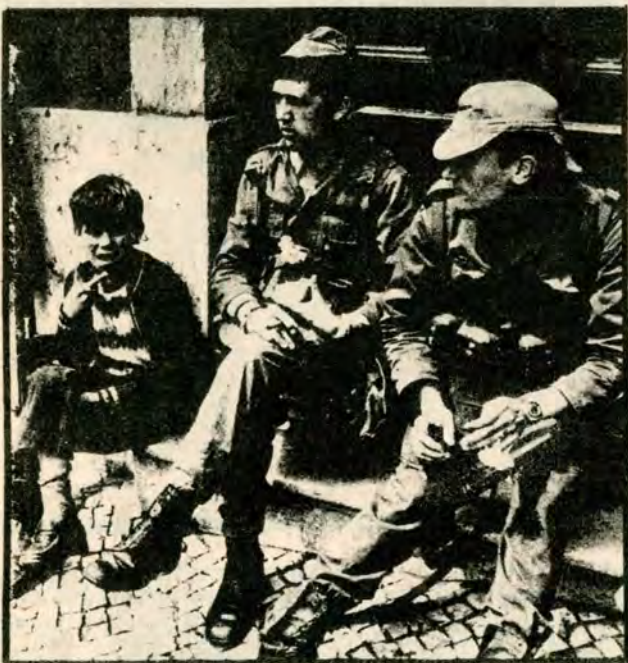
DC: After 25 April we wanted there and then to take the revolution into the armed forces, to make it felt at every level and in every section. Initially, and until 28 September, we tried to develop political education work in every unit, but this was blocked by the Chief of Staff, at that time General Silverio Marques. It was hard to make any progress at all. Since 28 September things have got clearer and from then onwards we've been setting up a really democratic kind of organisation within the armed forces. Various kinds of assembly have been set up. After 11 March, further changes. Everything was getting clearer, and the process — which goes forward by stages — took on a more distinct form, so we set up a new MFA general assembly, including soldiers, sergeants and officers. So now the soldiers have full rights of representation in the most powerful MFA body, and that is very important because it allows them, at a regional level and in the different sections, to take an active part in the process of renovation.

Recently, there was a conference, the first conference for the sailors, which ended with about three thousand sailors present. They called it, and they invited to it various members of the Revolutionary Council, including Pinheiro de Azevedo, head of the Navy's high command. It was an amazing conference. It was a perfect example of how strongly based the democratic organisation is becoming. For us, democracy in the heart of the armed forces means every rank taking part in the revolution. Everyone should put forward their own ideas. The meetings and assemblies are the means through which the revolution reaches into every

corner. Nothing should be hidden, we've got to be able to discuss everything frankly. Certainly, there are difficulties.

LC: What's the relationship between the growth of democracy in the barracks and the military's links with the outside world, with the struggle that's developing in the country?

DC: That link is only beginning to become firm now. The key question is political consciousness. Certainly, it's matured extraordinarily fast this year, but you shouldn't forget that until 25 April we lived under an oppressive stopper. Soldiers couldn't talk politics, and politics was kept out of the barracks; everything was undercover. After the liberation, as I said, the advances have been enormous. They've come out of our experiences. The political parties, counting on the depoliticisation of the armed forces, thought they'd be able to stage a rapid takeover of the military. The Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) were the first to reach the barracks, followed by the socialists, then the extreme left, all trying to get their oar in. At present, the extreme left has the biggest influence, especially among the soldiers, but still the majority – more than those who support the parties – stick to the MFA's ideas. The MFA isn't a party and I think it should remain a separate political organisation, obviously leaning to the left, but above all the parties. Without its own cut and dried ideology, but able to hold sway throughout the armed forces.



LC: The latest MFA bulletin is very critical of the bourgeois democratic model, talking specifically of the necessity to build 'popular power'. How can the military support the growth of mass organisation and help proletarian control to take hold in every sector of society?

DC: What I would like to see, which is for me the main aim in the armed forces, is the transformation of the regular forces into a people's army. I think this would be possible under certain conditions.

Beginning in the late fifties, our armed forces began to undergo a process of proletarianisation. Previously, the officers came exclusively from the ruling classes, who wanted a military career for their sons. Then, partly as a result of the spread of schooling, lower class youngsters started joining the armed forces too. Because of this, the officers have been able to take part in an upheaval which could be to the benefit of the working classes. The 'coup' has had a left tinge because so far we've been able to get rid of a large number of the senior ranks compromised with the old regime. The reactionaries, the aristocrats, the ones who wouldn't accept the new democracy, have been thrown out,

so, in today's conditions, the armed forces have taken on a definite orientation to the people.

For a short time now we've been looking at the possibility of having a single entrance system. So that instead of automatic commissions for people coming out of the universities, we would like, through a general entrance, to select the men suitable for command, regardless of their class background, so as to give workers the opportunity of becoming officers and to enable the lawyers to become soldiers. . . . This would be a clear step in the direction of a people's army, whilst retaining for the time being the regular structure.

LC: How free are the soldiers today to organise themselves?

DC: Discipline has to be maintained in some form, and the hierarchy has a function too, because you can't achieve anything positive without a minimum of order and method. In the barracks, at every level, there are all kinds of moves towards equality and the abolition of privileges.

Rations are already equal for everybody, and there are moves to setting up single messing facilities for soldiers and officers, but maybe the soldiers themselves prefer to keep their autonomy and to meet separately, and that isn't a bad thing.

LC: What do you think of the 'revolutionary councils', the idea of setting up common grass roots organisation bringing together workers, soldiers, and the progressive officers?

DC: I'm not in disagreement with the setting up of revolutionary councils. In fact, I'm quite favourable to them. It's an experience, like others, which shows that some sections of the people are ready for a total revolution. They get organised, put forward new ideas, go forward; this can only be very positive.

Still, I think that revolutionary councils don't correspond to the present situation. Conditions aren't yet ripe because they would have to be transformed by a powerful mass movement. From this point of view, they're not really strong enough.

As far as the soldiers and officers are concerned, I think that that kind of organisational experience could lead to a better link with the workers, and therefore to clarify their ideas and perspectives. But that still doesn't rule out the need for internal organisation. Inside the units, it's a good thing that soldiers and officers are getting organised, taking decisions, criticising and re-ordering life in the barracks.

LC: When was COPCON set up? What's its exact purpose? To what extent is it a parallel body to the high command?

DC: It's important to be clear about this. The army high command has administrative and material functions which are important at a time of general reorganisation. COPCON was set up at a time of crisis for the first provisional government, last July, when the Spínola prime minister Palma Carlos was sent packing and replaced by Vasco Gonçalves. It's concerned with operational tasks. It's the command HQ for the whole army in Portugal. Apart from this, it has at its direct disposal certain forces of intervention, such as RAL 1, as well as two parachute companies and the marine detachment which are always at our disposal. On the other hand, we don't have permanent call on naval and air units. Still, if the need arises, we can use them, as we did on 11 March, when we needed to carry out aerial reconnaissance, as well as during the elections. COPCON also has the means to take effective operational control of the whole country, centralising its actions through the various regional HQs.

LC: To a certain extent, COPCON, given the enforced lethargy the police have had to accept, also looks after public order. On what basis does it carry out this task?

DC: Sure, we've become the main guarantor of public order. Our job is to prevent violence. People need some kind



of peace, that's normal. Our only repressive actions have been against drugs, prostitution, robbery, organised crime. And then we work alongside the police. Otherwise, we always, or nearly always, try to prevent violence at meetings. As for direct action against house or land squats, we've always supported the people's just demands, and in cases where these actions might step outside the bounds of revolutionary legality, we've tried to work on the basis of convincing the law breakers politically, always avoiding the use of force against the people, something which is unacceptable for us.

LC: To what extent have the election results changed the balance of forces inside the army?

DC: I don't think they have to any large extent. The progressive forces are at present the most active and dynamic. The moderates don't really have an organised presence. Of course, there are some elements who do, but they are isolated, with the great majority supporting and taking part in the process. As long as we can keep the initiative, we can stop the conservative forces making any gains. I'm absolutely convinced that now in the armed forces, in the Revolutionary Council, and even more so in the general assembly of the MFA, if it was necessary to take decisions — really crucial ones I mean, about how we wanted to lay the line down about socialism or not — there wouldn't be much difficulty.

LC: The MFA's often criticised the parties for not playing a sufficient part in stimulating the revolutionary process. Some soldiers have seen the possibility of forming a new party, a kind of civilian MFA. What do you think about that?

DC: Today, this is probably the most serious problem. The MFA has had an amazing impact at mass level. If we'd taken part in the elections we'd have won. The truth is that the parties don't have very deep roots, and they also fight among each other to the extent of threatening the unity of the base. We have to fight the big bourgeoisie which lays down the PPD's political line, of course. The struggle between the parties is maybe a distraction, which puts us in a difficult position. But that doesn't mean we're thinking of taking on the task of mass mobilisation, even if that were possible for the MFA. The MFA needs the parties, and of course the parties need the MFA, if we're to achieve socialism.

LC: On the question of Portugal's international position — how do you think you can carry out a policy of autonomy and neutralism?

DC: It's very important for us to make rapid progress towards national independence, so that we aren't dependent on either the US, the USSR or Europe. To be free to turn to the Third World. In fact, it's from there that the forces could develop which would guarantee our independence. The socialist bloc is open to us, to be perfectly frank. But we don't want to have to depend on any super-power. Of course, we know that our country is, and will remain so for the foreseeable future, economically dependent. In terms of what we produce, we are a very backward, poor and weak country. Forced to import most of what it consumes — therefore not autonomous — and eating up its reserves at an impressive rate.

LC: On the question of workers' struggle and strikes at present, it seems to me that some recent view of the government and the MFA risk a bureaucratic opposition and a repressive response to the autonomous actions of the masses. The 'production battle' is being put forward officially and Cuba is referred to, but the situation there was quite different.

DC: Sure, the situations are different. The revolution was begun by a small group of officers, without the involvement of the parties. The direct involvement of the masses, in a process which is obviously rooted in the long years of resistance against fascism, is something that has happened since 25 April.

LC: How does that fit with staying in NATO?

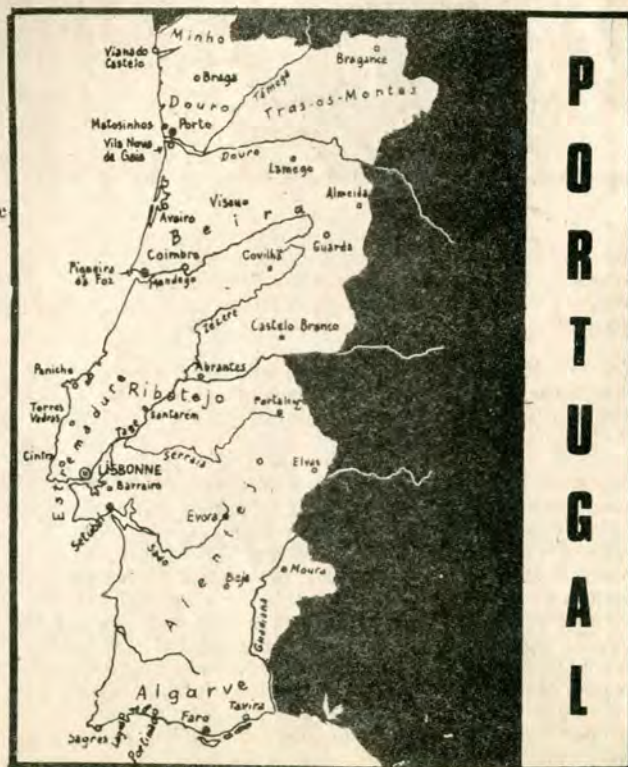
DC: Our position on NATO is, in fact, rather difficult to define.

NATO's reactions to what's going on in Portugal today hasn't been good, obviously: given that its aims are to protect the western world from the Soviet Union and communism. We've got communists in the government here which worries them a lot. They don't send us documents anymore, they're scared that the military secrets might be lost.

LC: What part can international solidarity play at the present time?

DC: International solidarity, in Europe and throughout the world, is very important and may be able to help to guarantee our independence. Links between liberated peoples strengthen the consciousness of autonomy. If this consciousness remains strong and preventative — not coming when it's all over, as it was in Chile — it will be for us a further guarantee of victory. Our experience is having repercussions throughout Europe and the world.

The exploited of all the countries support us and are sympathetic towards our revolution. Which is not really true of the various governments. They see us, justifiably, as a bad example. You've only got to think about what they've said about us in Spain, or of the fact that in France they've refused entry to members of the MFA, and so on. But since what we're doing has a general value, the influence of our revolution will counteract the lies. A blaze, an explosion of freedom across the continent at this time of serious world-wide capitalist crisis, wouldn't be the only result. The revolution, for the first time, would have reached the very heart of the international capitalist system.



This pamphlet has been reprinted and distributed by the Somerville Tenants' Union. We are a working-class organization, doing tenants, welfare, anti-racism and workplace organizing in New England. We believe that the Portuguese class struggle reflects a qualitative leap in the development of the strength of the working-class in the industrialized countries. While events have superseded some details of this pamphlet, its importance lies in telling how the organizations of the working-class, and not any single political party or group, are building and defending socialism in Portugal.

The woman in the cover photo is Isobel do Carmo, General Secretary of the Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat/Revolutionary Brigades. Many thanks to the sisters and brothers of BIG FLAME and to the New England Free Press.

LISNAVE WORKERS LEAFLET

In struggling to rid the Lisnave management of its fascists, the workers have become aware that they are not only fighting for the downfall of the fascist structure inside Lisnave, but also against the whole of the exploiting ruling class.

In this way the workers of Lisnave are joining with the brave fight of TAP, of *Jornal do Comercio*, of Siderurgia, of Texmalhas, backing all the struggles from North to South, and leaving the narrow walls of the factory to come onto the streets and show:

That our fight to rid ourselves of fascists is not a secondary fight, it is a principal struggle because it is part of the permanent fight against all the forms of fascism being constantly generated by monopoly capitalism.

That where there is initiative and organized struggle by the oppressed classes, the forces of reaction retreat. Where there is lack of vigilance on the part of the people, the counter-revolutionary forces advance and wipe out the freedoms already achieved.

That we support all the laws and measures of the Provisional Government which help to increase the freedom of the workers, and of the peoples exploited and oppressed by Portuguese Colonialism.

That we do not back the Government when it comes out with anti-working class laws which undermine the struggles of workers against capitalist exploitation.

That we shall actively fight the strike the 'strike law' because it is a big blow to the freedom of the workers.

That we reject the 'lock-out law' as a law against the workers and for the protection of the capitalists, granting to the bosses the freedom to starve thousands of workers.

Because we know that the 120 million escudos, are not, as claim the Melos, Champalimauds, Quinas & Company, to create 120 thousand jobs, but to create better conditions under which to exploit the workers.

That we reject all attempts, no matter from where they come, to sabotage and divide the working masses in their fight against fascism & capitalism.

That we support the Armed Forces so long as they support the struggles of the oppressed and exploited classes against the oppressing and exploiting classes.

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